DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation, entitled

Biblical Interpretation and the Shaping of Religious Worlds:

A Study of Bible Study for Critical Contextualization

written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

has been read and approved by the undersigned members of

the Faculty of

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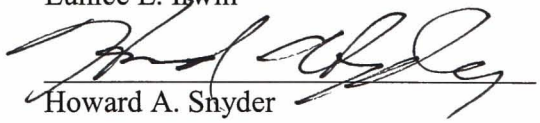

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May 2004

ABSTRACT

In bringing the gospel to the nations, a strategy for Bible study that can sufficiently locate itself within the more comprehensive missional strategy of contextualization is vital. However, missional Bible study practices, such as popular and historical critical modes of reading, have tended to have the opposite effect.

This dissertation is concerned with investigating how elements from intercultural communication, discourse analysis and religious studies may contribute to a strategy for Bible study that allows the church to incarnate more fully the gospel in different cultures. This strategy is a contextual approach that consciously brings local cultural life into dialog with biblical texts, a dynamic that at once stimulates and constrains the process of contextualization.

This study considered the work of three scholars: Carley H. Dodd and his contributions to intercultural communication; Joel B. Green, who integrates discourse analysis and biblical scholarship; and William E. Paden's structures of religious world construction. This threefold analysis is framed theoretically by Paul Hiebert's model of critical contextualization and Clifford Geertz's theory of religion as a form of cultural life. This study also assumes a critical realist epistemology, which posits a reality external to our perceptions, which people come to understand dialectically.

This methodology yields a contextualized Bible study strategy that facilitates the development of Christian communal relations among participants so that they increasingly experience interactions with each other as a hermeneutical community. The strategy is put into practice and the results examined for the purposes of demonstrating the adequacy of this strategy where others fail.

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

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Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation Committee:

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by

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May 2004

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EDITORS' FOREWORD

Dr. Mark Hatcher's research on a missiological approach to biblical studies incubated over a long period of time, including not only his formal study as a postgraduate student in the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary, but also his years of teaching in intercultural contexts. As a Teaching Fellow and Assistant Director of Greek Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, he continued to cultivate his interest in a contextual hermeneutic, this time especially in relation to instruction in the biblical languages. At the time of his untimely and unexpected death in January 2004, he was preparing to bring to a close his years at Asbury Theological Serminary; Rovina, his wife, and Mark anticipated a return to higher education in a missional setting where he would carry on the contextual hermeneutic he developed in this dissertation. His death interrupted the completion of chapters five and six of this study. On the basis of the quality of the hermeneutical contributions of his earlier chapters, however, the Faculty voted to grant Mark the Doctor of Philosophy posthumously, and urged that his research, sans those concluding chapters, be made available to others for study. In preparing this work for publication, we have intruded into Mark's own voice as little as possible. Our hope is that Dr. Hatcher's critical reflections will provide the impetus for others to proceed down the trail he has so ably marked.

Joey Koskie

Joel B. Green

CHAPTER 1

Contextualization and Bible Study

Introduction to the Problem

Darrell L. Whiteman (1997:2) observes that throughout its history the church has struggled with how the gospel and local cultural context are to relate to each other. The model of the incarnation has repeatedly challenged the church to likewise incarnate the gospel. As the Son of God entered into first century Palestinian culture and powerfully proclaimed and lived the gospel in ways that both resonated with and exposed the sinfulness of that culture, his church is called to do the same. Whiteman (1997:6) states that the challenge is to "carry out the Great Commission and live out the Great Commandment in a world of cultural diversity with a Gospel that is both truly Christian in content and culturally significant in form." He (1997:2) notes that missiological discussion has used words like "adaptation," "accommodation," and "indigenization" in earlier efforts to describe the church's effort to incarnate the gospel. Since their introduction in the early 1970s, many have seen the words "contextualization" and "inculturation" to be more dynamic and adequate terms.

Whiteman (1997:6) argues that while there is much excellent theory about contextualization, there are significant obstacles that have inhibited its practice in contemporary mission. He identifies ethnocentrism and ecclesiastical hegemony as the primary sources of resistance. Mission-sending organizations and indigenous leaders of churches that were their offspring often become entrenched in perpetuating ecclesiastical

forms and practices that are like the churches supporting those organizations. They seem to fear that changes in practice in order to be more contextual in the local culture may in fact result in the gospel's being changed into something that is not the gospel.

While agreeing with Whiteman's contention, I propose that there is an additional significant obstacle to contextualization. Bible study practices (including not doing Bible study at all) commonly engaged in by those involved in mission organizations and in local churches can significantly hinder the church's incarnation of the gospel. Some missiological discussions have recognized this, with the Willowbank Report (1979:438), a document produced by a "Consultation on Gospel and Culture" sponsored by the Lausanne Theology and Education Group in 1978, providing a clear example. It typifies two widely practiced traditional approaches to Bible study that can provide problems for contextualization.

According to the report, the strategy Christian communities most commonly employ is a "popular approach." They study biblical texts as if they were written in the reader's own language, culture, and time. In one of the documents presented at the consultation, Padilla (1979:85) observed that those utilizing this strategy are concerned with the relevance and appropriation of the message of the text to their own situation. He identified the attractiveness of the approach with its affirmation that people do not need technical training to study the Bible, that the Holy Spirit will illuminate people so that they hear a word from God through the text, and that its pursuit lends itself to an obedient response to the word that is heard. The Willowbank Report recognizes that this approach sometimes leads to an adequate hearing of and response to God. Chang (1984:116)

observes that the strategy depends upon people having experiences that they readily perceive are consonant with what a biblical text is expressing.[1]

A serious weakness in the approach lies in its providing few checks to restrain interpreters from seeing through their Bible study any meaning beyond what they are predisposed to see.[2] The Willowbank Report notes that the failure of the popular approach to take account of the historical context of a biblical text sets up a serious risk that people may misconstrue what God intends to communicate to them through the biblical text. I would further elaborate that through ignoring the contexts in which the Bible presents its communication, the popular approach does not give the opportunity for those contexts to stimulate and constrain the meaning people perceive. It can thwart people from listening to and following cues in a biblical text that might prompt them to hear the address of the gospel in domains of life beyond what they have already been socialized to expect it to address. It may also facilitate people giving to the gospel meanings that pursue their personal and cultural agendas, with no way for the broader Christian community to effectively interact with a local community in regard to whether those meanings are consonant or dissonant with the gospel.

The Willowbank Report (1979:438) states that the other common interpretive strategy is one or another variation of a "historical" approach. They typify this approach as seeking to discover what a biblical text meant in its original linguistic and cultural context and the way the text relates to the rest of the Bible. Other scholars have typified the strategy as taking up a position of detached neutrality in order to pursue this investigation. Once interpreters determine what a text meant in its original context they abstract from it universal principles that can apply to new historical situations including

their own.[3] The attractiveness of this approach lies in the perception that it enables people to engage in a study of the Bible that will objectively determine the meaning of biblical texts and the universal principles of the gospel that are expressed by them. Through determining these principles the Christian community has an objective basis to state the meaning of the gospel in relation to a question at hand and to critique beliefs and practices.

The Willowbank Report identifies the primary weakness of the historical approach with its tendency to stay in the past and not adequately consider the address of the text to contemporary readers. When this happens, the result is academic knowledge without understanding of or obedience to what a text might mean for contemporary life. This effectively hinders biblical texts from guiding and critiquing contemporary efforts at contextualization. The report also notes that the approach tends to foster a sense of objectivity that overlooks the effect of the interpreter's cultural presuppositions. Wink (1973:1-7) elaborates on this by observing that historical criticism was developed within an ideology of objectivism that sought to maintain detached neutrality and Cartesian doubt while studying biblical texts rather than becoming involved in a "lived response" to them. When the historical approach is used with these presuppositions the detached neutrality makes it difficult for people to listen for the voice of God through their study of the texts and the Cartesian doubt makes it difficult to ever arrive at assured results that can then be engaged with contemporary life issues.[4] Mulholland (1985) further observes that the historical critical reading of the Bible can be pursued from the presumption that meaning is communicated primarily at the cognitive level. Such a presumption can lead

to a focus on gathering information and hinder openness to an encounter that draws readers into the new order of existence shaped by Christ.[5]

Conn (1984:185-186) draws attention to the ethnocentric orientation of most contemporary forms of historical critical exegesis. He states that it has generally remained a Western skill carried on in a Western mindset. Segovia (1998:4-6) draws attention to the pedagogical implications of this, observing that it encourages a learned impartation and passive response relationship in which the Western teacher becomes the expert who collects and disseminates knowledge to the students. He sees these implications as perpetuating a focus on the concerns of those who obtain scholarly expertise and an ignoring of the concerns and contexts of non-Western peoples as well as those of peoples situated in the margins of the societies that dominate teaching institutions. When this occurs, the Bible study strategy effectively removes biblical texts as a source that stimulates and constrains contextualization. It also strengthens the ethnocentrism and ecclesiastical hegemony that Whiteman identified as hindering contextualization.

The Willowbank Report (438-439) identifies a third approach that it sees to more adequately facilitate contextualization. It calls this approach the "contextual" approach and typifies it as a dialog between text and interpreters. In this dialog interpreters should be conscious of their own concerns that arise from their cultural background, personal situation, and responsibility to others. They should engage with biblical texts in the context of those concerns, seeking how the texts address those concerns. However, interpreters should also be open to hearing not only answers to their concerns, but questions from the biblical texts. They should be open to hearing and responding to

challenges to their presuppositions, reformulations of their questions, and fresh questions that were initially outside their purview. This ongoing dialog is engaged with an aim to grow in knowledge of, love for, and obedience to God. It might be characterized as an "upward spiral in which Scripture remains always central and normative."

The contextual approach is concerned for the Bible to actually function in Christian life in a normative way, stimulating and constraining our contextualization. As will be seen in chapter 2, the above characteristics of the contextual approach are prominent in missiological discussions about what kind of Bible study strategy facilitates contextualization. While concurring with the thrust of these characteristics, I also believe there is a need for further development of them. What can help such a dialog to occur? What needs to be considered to facilitate its implementation? What hermeneutical issues need to be addressed and how might we address them so that through the dialog we adequately and effectively perceive and respond to God's address to us?

Paul Hiebert embraces the contextual approach and develops it through his model of critical contextualization.[6] The model has been widely influential in American evangelical missiology and is prominent in Hiebert's published works.[7] He brings about the dialog of the contextual approach through four basic steps. In the first step, leaders of Christian communities guide their communities in a study of particular beliefs and practices in their cultural situation that people in their communities associate with a specific question at hand. In the second step, leaders guide their communities in an examination of biblical passages that may speak to those beliefs and practices. In the third step, leaders guide their communities to corporately evaluate their beliefs and practices in the light of the understandings they have received from the Bible study. In

that evaluation they determine what beliefs and practices may be retained, what must be discarded, what should be modified and what should be replaced by a functional substitute in order to express a Christian response to the question at hand. In the fourth step, leaders guide their communities in choosing ways to implement their responses to the question at hand. Such responses include the construction of ritual expressions and the establishment of ministries that transform individuals and churches. Hiebert indicates that the four steps of his model are to be engaged within the context of an ongoing process through which the church is developing as a Christian hermeneutical community.[8] He (1988:394) states that

> the Kingdom of God is always prophetic and calls all cultures towards God's ideals, and that citizens of that Kingdom are to form living communities that manifest the nature of that Kingdom. In such communities, understanding the Word of God must be an ongoing and living process that leads to discipleship under the Lordship of Christ in every area of life.

A significant strength of Hiebert's model lies in the directions it gives for making the contextual approach a communal project. Hiebert is particularly concerned that leaders empower a plurality of voices in their group to contribute to and facilitate group understanding, evaluation, and implementation of their Christian response to the cultural question at hand. His approach draws attention to the value of people helping each other bring forth knowledge of the characteristics of their culture and the functions and aims of their cultural beliefs and practices. This raises the cultural consciousness of all participants and helps them to engage their culture with the Bible and listen to what adjustments in cultural beliefs and practice that the Bible might direct. Corporate evaluation and implementation provides opportunity for people to help each other think through all the cultural relations that a particular response to the Bible might affect. This

in turn helps them to shape their response in ways that take account of those relations and elicits stronger ownership of the implementation.

Hiebert does not, however, adequately address the characteristics of ways that biblical texts might be explored and engaged so that the Bible study strategy enables people to perceive and receive the address of the Bible to their local concerns. He (1987:109-111; Hiebert, Shaw, Tiénou 1999b:383-385) largely limits himself to noting important parameters for a Bible study that facilitates critical contextualization. He points to the need for people to engage the Bible as divine revelation. He also affirms that those engaging the Bible need to depend upon the Holy Spirit to guide their interpretation. He further affirms that participants need to recognize that the church, both locally and globally is a hermeneutical community. Corporate interpretation provides checks on the personal biases of individual interpretations and the cultural biases of interpretations made by local communities.

In regard to what a Bible study that embraces these parameters might look like, Hiebert (Hiebert 1987:109-111; Hiebert, Shaw, Tiénou 1999b:22-27) says little beyond affirming that leaders employ exegetical strategies, observe theological criteria repeatedly affirmed by church tradition, and utilize a metacultural framework to translate the biblical message into the cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions of the local culture.[9] Though I affirm some of the thrust of these affirmations, more needs to be said about what they entail and, in some particulars, their language is problematic. The great diversity of exegetical strategies for studying the Bible that are utilized and debated in academic circles suggests that we cannot just assume that there is agreement on what constitutes a good exegetical strategy. What are the characteristics of an exegetical

strategy that facilitates people adequately and effectively hearing an address from God as they engage with the biblical texts? The problems that some historical approaches to exegesis create for contextualization have already been noted.

The language of a leader translating "the biblical message" and utilizing a metacultural framework to translate it leaves one wondering exactly what is considered to be the biblical message. The language suggests that the biblical message is what has been abstracted from biblical materials and can be stated in propositions. It carries implications of the historical approach's process of determining what a text meant, discerning universal principles from it, and then applying those principles through a metacultural framework. Though some biblical texts lend themselves to this linear analytical (and western) approach, could it possibly be too limited an understanding of how God can and does speaks to people through the Bible? The language raises questions in regard to what constitutes an appropriate metacultural framework that facilitates an adequate and effective hearing of biblical texts for the purpose of contextualization. Hiebert provides many helpful insights from anthropology, but the plethora of etic categories can become quite complex. Are there some basic categories that are particularly relevant for hearing the address of biblical texts and stimulating analogies in the contemporary situation to come into view?

The language further suggests that exegesis of the biblical message is something that is to be done primarily by the leader. Must this be so? Are there ways to include the various gifts of group members just as those gifts are employed in the other steps of Hiebert's model? Hiebert's model significantly contributes to a contextual approach to

Bible study. However, I propose that the model needs modification and further development in regard to these issues of Bible study strategy.

My own tradition suggests that part of this development of Hiebert's model could be gained through employing the inductive method of Bible study advocated by White (Eberhardt 1949) and further developed by Traina (1952), Thompson (1994), and others. The method presupposes that biblical texts present a subject that speaks to those studying them with "the voice of the living God' (Thompson 1994:27). Interpreters focus on hearing that voice through careful observation of the biblical text. They raise questions about literary and historical relationships that help them to observe and interpret the meanings biblical authors intended to convey through their texts. They evaluate the relation of those meanings to other texts in the canon and the trajectory of canonical dialogue on the topic. Once readers determine those meanings and evaluate their place in the trajectory of canonical dialogue they raise questions regarding how they may imaginatively engage their contemporary lives with those meanings in the context of that trajectory and be changed by them.[10]

Though inductive Bible study method gives direction for observing and listening to biblical texts with a view to engaging them with our contemporary lives, it still needs further clarification and perhaps modification in regard to what facilitates this engagement. Chang (1984) complains that the inductive Bible study method generally begins with an approach to the Bible that treats it as an external object of inquiry and initially limits engagement with biblical texts to questions of meaning that can only be explored through linear analytical thinking. Subjective application to contemporary life is postponed until one has exhaustively explored and analyzed biblical texts in relation to

such questions. When used in this way, the method tends to give a superior position to those who have had extensive schooling in analysis and to not recognize the value of those who are skilled in other modes of knowing, such as existential, intuitive, empathetic, and Gestalt. Chang argues that when used in isolation from intuitive and analogical means to understanding it cuts off some of the most important dimensions of meaning in the biblical text, making the text something remote, lifeless, and impersonal. Though all do not use the inductive Bible study method in this kind of isolation, Chang's complaint suggests more clarification and development of how to use it without this isolation is needed. How might its helpful analysis of literary and historical relationships be integrated with intuitive and analogical means to understanding?[11] Does it have to be pursued in a rigid linear way that postpones consideration of subjective application until exhaustive study is completed?

The above discussion suggests the need for further development of the contextual approach to Bible study so that it facilitates and empowers critical contextualization. Is there a way to develop a Bible study strategy that can relate to the positive strengths of the popular approach and the historical approach with which most Christian communities are already familiar? Is there a way to more fully clarify the characteristics of a Bible study strategy that implements and empowers the dialog of the contextual approach? What kinds of engagements with biblical texts and what kind of social environments can build upon Hiebert's insightful work on critical contextualization and empower its mission goal and transformational agenda? Can exegesis engage intuitive, analytical, and analogical modes of interaction with biblical texts? How can the strategy be pursued so that Christians at any level of interpretive experience and skill[12]could meaningfully

participate in the strategy and do so in interactions with others in their community? What would such a strategy look like and how would it integrate with and develop Hiebert's model?

Statement of the Problem

There is a gap between contextualization theory and the practice of contextualization in mission organizations and local churches. The Willowbank Report and other missiological discussions have recognized that Bible study practices in the churches can contribute to that gap. The popular and historical approaches to Bible study that are commonly practiced in churches have significant weaknesses that hinder the Bible from actually functioning in a normative and life forming way, stimulating and constraining contextualization. A contextual approach that consciously brings local cultural life into dialog with biblical texts is needed.

Paul Hiebert's model of critical contextualization gives some significant direction for how such a dialog might be facilitated. It features a communal approach where participants in a Christian group help each other examine their cultural context, seek together for guidance from the Bible in regard to issues arising in that context, evaluate together what that guidance means for a contextual Christian response to those issues, and determine together how they will implement that response. Hiebert affirms the need for participants in the dialog to engage the Bible as divine revelation, to depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to be open to the checks that other Christians might provide to biases in their interpretations. He affirms that the steps he outlines should be engaged within the context of an ongoing process through which the church is developing as a Christian hermeneutical community.

Hiebert does not adequately address the characteristics of ways that biblical texts might be explored and engaged so that the exploration and engagement enables people to perceive and receive the address of the Bible to their local concerns. What exegetical strategies facilitate this perception and reception? What fosters the interweaving of biblical passages with contemporary life while taking account of the way biblical texts are embedded in cultural and linguistic webs that are different from contemporary life? Are there some basic categories that are particularly relevant for hearing the address of biblical texts and stimulating analogies in the contemporary situation to come into view? Are there ways to include the various gifts of group members in the exploration and interpretation of biblical texts? Can exegesis engage intuitive, analytical, and analogical modes of interaction with biblical texts? What kinds of Bible study environments and questions can build upon Hiebert's insightful work on critical contextualization and empower its mission goal and transformational agenda?

Contemporary discussions in the disciplines of intercultural communication, discourse analysis, and religious studies offer some significant insights into how people perceive and receive meaning and what facilitates that perception and reception to happen. They may provide direction for shaping a Bible study strategy that effectively responds to the kind of questions mentioned above. The interactive processes of Carley H. Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Joel B. Green's approach to discourse analysis, and William E. Paden's structures of religious world construction each present possibilities for shaping a strategy of Bible study that addresses and empowers the agenda and goal of critical contextualization. Their integration into a strategy for Bible study may overcome the hindrances to contextualization that common hermeneutical

approaches currently present. **This dissertation proposes (1) to examine Carley H. Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Joel B. Green's approach to discourse analysis, and William E. Paden's structures of religious world construction in relation to issues of perception and reception of meaning in order (2) to develop a strategy of Bible study that integrates with and empowers the transformational agenda and mission goal of Paul G. Hiebert's model of critical contextualization, and (3) to demonstrate the plausibility of employing the strategy through a graduate level class that provides students with opportunities to experience and evaluate the contribution of the strategy to critical contextualization.**

Research Questions

The focus of this dissertation is to develop a strategy of Bible study that overcomes the difficulties presented by common hermeneutical approaches for empowering the transformational agenda and mission goal of critical contextualization. It pursues the development of this strategy by researching how the contributions of Dodd, Green, and Paden address issues of perception and reception of meaning that have been raised in contemporary discussions of biblical hermeneutics. The research identifies what these issues are; the ways they are addressed by contributions from Dodd, Green, and Paden; the warrants for these ways of addressing the issues; what enables these contributions to be integrated into a coherent Bible study strategy; and the way the strategy can coherently interface with and empower Hiebert's model. To clarify what the strategy might look like when implemented, and the plausibility of implementation, the researcher conducted a demonstration of its introduction and use in a graduate level class, and evaluated data from that demonstration. The following questions guided the research:

1. What issues have arisen in discussions of biblical hermeneutics regarding people's perception and reception of meaning when they study a biblical text? How do these discussions help clarify the problems and possibilities for Bible study to contribute to the construction of religious worlds?

2. How does Dodd's model of intercultural communication address the above issues of perception and reception of meaning and what warrants does he employ for that address?

3. How does Green's approach to discourse analysis address the above issues of perception and reception of meaning and what warrants does he employ for that address?

4. How does Paden's structures of religious world construction address the above issues of perception and reception of meaning and what warrants does he employ for that address?

5. At what points do Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction intersect with each other?

6. How could Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction be integrated into an alternative strategy for Bible study and what would be the theoretical warrants for that integration?

7. How does this alternative strategy for Bible study interface with and develop Hiebert's model of critical contextualization, addressing both the agenda and goal of Hiebert's model?

8. How could the resulting alternative strategy for Bible study be introduced to and initially employed by people preparing for Christian ministry so that they can coherently

articulate it, experience its utility and envision how to employ it in a local or trans-local Christian community?

Definitions

Meaning. Howard A. Snyder (1995:12) argues that meaning has something to do with coherence, the interconnection of things. He (1995:229) further affirms that there must be a conscious willing subject that is coherently placing a referent within a web of relationships with other referents in order for meaning to exist. Luzebetak (1988:225-234) provides a number of examples that illustrate the complex interweaving of relationships that can constitute such webs for a group or society. The social dimension implicit in his examples suggest that meaning exists through a *group* of conscious willing subjects placing a referent within a web of relationships as the group interacts with each other. Snyder's discussions on the ecology of meaning (Snyder 1995:242-245) and on the relationship of order, surprise, and beauty to meaning (Snyder 1995:247-260) suggest that meaning cannot be limited to intellectual comprehension of coherence and significance. It may also include such things as an intuition of coherence and significance, a feeling of coherence and significance, and a sense of rightness. Luzebetak (1988:227,238) states that a society does not always recognize many of the relationships within which they have placed a referent, yet they will feel to apply them. In harmony with this, I will use the term to refer to the many dimensions of significance that a referent has through its being coherently placed within a web of relationships by a group of conscious willing subjects.

Gospel. Wall (1983:239) observes that the use of the term *gospel* in the Bible is diverse and multifaceted, making it difficult to describe all to which it refers. The Willowbank Report (1979:440-441) illustrates this by identifying as central to the gospel

> the themes of God as Creator, the universality of sin, Jesus Christ as Son of God, Lord of all, and Saviour through his atoning death and risen life, the necessity of conversion, the coming of the Holy Spirit and his transforming power, the fellowship and mission of the Christian church, and the hope of Christ's return.

Jesus (Mark 1:15) associated the gospel with the kingdom of God. Recognizing the broad scope of the term, I will use it to refer to the complex of all that God did, is doing and will do for the world through the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, ongoing reign, and future coming of Jesus Christ as set in the context of God's purposes from creation to new creation that are presented through the various writings of the Old and New Testaments.

Contextualization. Gilliland (2000:225) observes that there is no broad agreement in the literature regarding what definition to give the term. The term was first introduced in the document entitled *Ministry in Context* (1972) published by the Theological Education Fund. The document was concerned with laying out the principles that would govern the distribution of funds to those requesting support from the TEF. It (1972:20-21) defined *contextualization* as a dynamic process that is concerned with Christian communities responding to the gospel in terms of their particular cultural situation, taking into account "the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical moment of nations in the Third World." The term rapidly became current in missiological literature, though a number of voices raised concerns in regard to what nuances it might have in terms of both meaning and method.[13] Gilliland (2000:225) has proposed a definition of the term in relation to its goal, stating

that it refers to the effort of a particular church to authentically experience Jesus Christ in its situation, hearing the answers the gospel provides for a particular people living in a particular place at a particular time.[14] I will adapt Gilliland's proposal by using the term to refer to the processes engaged in by a local or trans-local Christian community to authentically experience Jesus Christ in its situation and bring into community expression the ongoing transformational call of the gospel to their life issues, contemporary experience, contemporary situation, hopes, and aspirations.

Religious world. Paden (1994:viii) defines a *world* as "the operating environment of language and behavioral options that persons presuppose and inhabit at any given point in time and from which they choose their course of action." *Religious world* focuses attention on how the language and behavioral options that people inhabit are structured around what they deem to be sacred and provides them with ways to relate to the sacred (1994:ix). This operating environment of language and behavioral options creates both possibilities and limitations upon what kind of language and behavior people may consider and use as they relate to God, other people, and anything else they experience. Paden (1994:7) says it is "a descriptive term for what a community or individual deems is the 'reality' it inhabits, not a term for some single system objectively 'out there' that we all somehow share." Since its referent is to human assumptions and perceptions, there can be as many religious worlds as there are communities of people. A religious world in this sense is primarily the creation of a human community, though it does not exclude the possibility of something "out there" stimulating and in part shaping what a community or an individual deems to be the reality it inhabits. I will be employing Paden's definition.

Culture. Darrell Whiteman (1995 class notes) observes that anthropologists have offered hundreds of definitions for the concept of culture. The variety is primarily due to the many facets of the complex system to which the term refers and the emphasis that suits the researcher's concerns. Ember and Ember (1993:17) state that culture refers to the innumerable aspects of the total way of life of any society. They say "some anthropologists think of culture as the rules or ideas behind behavior." Whiteman (1983:27 note 26) is an example of this when he defines culture as "the complex array of ideas that man [sic] carries in his head, which are expressed in the form of material artifacts and observable behavior." Ember and Ember say that other anthropologists "think of culture as including the learned behaviors as well as the beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population. Nida (1954:28-29) is an example of this when he defines culture as all the socially acquired ways a person has learned to behave, think, and react. These ways of behaving, thinking, and reacting fall into patterns that deeply interrelate with one another and constantly influence each other. Dodd (1998:36,275) defines culture in relation to his research interest in intercultural communication. He states, "Culture is the holistic summation and interrelationship of an identifiable group's beliefs, norms, activities, institutions, and communication patterns." Drawing from all of these definitions, I offer the following: Culture is the inter-related and slowly changing patterns of norms, ideas, behaviors, values, moods, and representations that are shared, transmitted and learned by members of an identifiable group and passed on to those who enter and identify with the group, holding a community together.

Intercultural communication. Both Dodd (1998:277) and Smith (2000:492) define *intercultural communication* as interaction among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The word "interaction" in this definition draws attention to the way communication is a two-way process that stimulates the formation and sharing of meaning among those involved in the process. Smith (2000:493) views the goal of the interaction to be shared understanding between the participants. Dodd (1998:4) sees the interaction as a process that influences outcomes such as "friendship, negotiation, information clarification, adjustment to a new culture, successful task completion, and developing positive interpersonal relationships in a new culture." I will use the term to refer to interaction between people from diverse cultural backgrounds that stimulates the formation and sharing of meaning among those involved in the process and influences outcomes such as friendship, negotiation, information clarification, adjustment to a new culture, task completion, and developing interpersonal relationships in a new culture.

Discourse analysis. *Discourse* refers to a communicative interchange between two or more parties. According to Brown and Yule (1983:26) *discourse analysis* is a method of study that explores the connection the language employed in a communicative interchange has to what people are doing and what ends they are pursuing and seeks to account for the way the linguistic features in the discourse are the means they employ in what they are doing. I will be employing Brown and Yule's definition.

Hermeneutical Community. *Hermeneutical community* is used by various writers to refer to the involvement of diverse members of the Christian community (as opposed to one dominating person or group) in a process of interpreting the Bible, their contemporary context, and faithful relationship with God in their context. For example,

the Willowbank Report (1979:439) states that "the task of understanding the Scriptures belongs not just to individuals but to the whole Christian community, seen as both a contemporary and a historical fellowship." Contemporary fellowship draws attention to local gatherings of Christians while historical fellowship refers to the linkage that each local fellowship has with others across time and culture.[15] The involvement of diverse members of the local and historical fellowship in interpretation provides a means for all who are in Christ to help each other mature in Christ as they "teach and admonish one another in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16). The inclusion of various voices seeking to interpret under the guidance of the Holy Spirit checks personal biases in interpretation and interaction with voices from other fellowships across time and culture can reveal cultural biases (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999b:385).[16] Dyrness (1985:172) states that this inclusion "not only protects us from individual aberrations but also ensures that every member is fully involved in the process of growth toward maturity in Christ." Shaw (1995:158) observes that the process facilitates embodiment of the gospel in a way that interprets the gospel's relevance to participants in the hermeneutical community and to those living in their local context.[17] In the light of the above, I will use the term to refer to a gathering of Christians who engage in a process of interpreting the Bible, their contemporary contexts, and faithful relationship with God in those contexts for the purpose of embodying the gospel in ways relevant to those contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation is concerned with investigating the ways that elements from intercultural communication, discourse analysis, and religious studies may contribute to a strategy for doing Bible study. It explores the contributions that Dodd's model of

intercultural communication, Green's adaptation of discourse analysis to biblical interpretation, and Paden's structures of religious world construction give to clarifying and refining an interpretive strategy for doing Bible study that empowers the transformational agenda and mission goal of Hiebert's model of critical contextualization. My approach to investigating and integrating these elements is strongly influenced by Geertz'ss understanding of religion as a cultural system. It also assumes the philosophical position of critical realism.

Religion as a Cultural System

Clifford Geertz (1966:4) has argued that a religion is

> a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Geertz (1966:5) defines a symbol as "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception." For example, a wood cross, the act of eating bread, the story of the crucifying of Jesus, a red sash worn by a minister, eating with someone of lower status, etc., can all function as symbols of the death of Jesus, serving as vehicles that enable people in a particular Christian community to apprehend and communicate conceptions of the death of Jesus. Such things function as "tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings or beliefs" (Geertz 1966:5). As any of the above symbols serves as a vehicle for a conception of the death of Jesus it is capable of having not only cognitive, but also affective and volitional dimensions. The sight of something like a wood cross can elicit thoughts such as the significance of

atoning sacrifice, but it can also elicit feelings such as thanksgiving and volitions such as a determination to be faithful to God even if it means suffering. Symbols in effect provide both a language that enables a community to think about such things as the death of Jesus and a way to stimulate moods and motivations for particular patterns of behavior that are perceived to be congruent with the symbols.

Geertz's (1966:3) approach to defining religion draws attention to the way that sacred symbols synthesize a people's ethos and their view of the world, integrating their moral and aesthetic approach to life with their picture of the way things actually are. Working together in a system of relationships, sacred symbols function simultaneously as models of the structure and constitution of reality, as models for the way people are to live in accord with reality, and as stimulations for powerful moods and motivations to so live. Geertz's understanding of religion indicates the gospel will become a significant shaping influence in a people's religious world only as it is associated with symbols that they integrate into the system of symbols that function as their model of the structure and constitution of reality. It suggests that a strategy for Bible study that has as its object the shaping of beliefs and practices in a Christian community's religious world by the gospel will need to provide avenues for the biblical passages that are studied to stimulate and constrain what conceptions they associate with the gospel. It will need to employ means that persuade people that the gospel expresses reality and that facilitates its association with symbols people can use to conceive its reality. The strategy for Bible study will also need to employ means that stimulate people to adjust their existing symbol systems to enter into a pattern of coherence with the gospel. All of these concerns will guide my interpretation of the relation Dodd, Green, and Paden have to issues regarding perception

and reception of meaning and the directions in which I will seek to integrate those contributions.

Critical Realism

Geertz's understanding of religion as a symbol system does not address whether or not there is any genuine correspondence between a particular people's symbol system and reality. It makes no comment on whether the symbol system is only the construction of the consciousness of a religious community or if it is also stimulated by a sacred reality that has ontological existence apart from their consciousness of it. However, our epistemological position will affect what we interpret to be influencing the construction and shape of a people's symbol system. It will also affect what we think will persuade people that the gospel is reality, what we think will facilitate the association of the gospel with symbols people use to conceive reality, and what we think will stimulate people to adjust their existing symbol systems to enter into a pattern of coherence with the gospel. It is therefore necessary to make clear the epistemological assumptions that inform the way I will investigate the contributions from Dodd, Green, and Paden and the directions in which I will seek to integrate those contributions. These assumptions may be categorized to be a form of critical realism.[18]

The fundamental assumption of critical realism (Hiebert 1999:69,117; Wright 1992:35; Kraft 1996:18) is that there is a reality, both material and metaphysical, that is ontologically external to our consciousness of it. People encounter this reality through sense experience and spiritual experiences that provide both a stimulating and a limiting influence upon their understanding of the nature of life, the world, spiritual beings and

forces, the sacred or God, and what is necessary to live within this reality. I will give expression to this assumption by presuming that all people experience influences from God, creation, people, and fundamental structures that God has created between and within them.

A second assumption (Hiebert 1999:81; Wright 1992:35) is that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between people's understanding of reality and reality. However, there is a dialectical relationship between these with the result that people's understanding of reality does not remain static. People are stimulated by reality to make adjustments when their understanding proves to be inadequate for dealing with what they are encountering. I will give expression to this assumption by presuming people's understanding of God and the gospel is always limited and in need of adjustment. Yet it is possible for people to adjust their understandings and even find their understandings transformed by ongoing interaction with the presentations of the gospel in the biblical writings.

A third assumption (Hiebert 1999:69-81) is that reality affects people in accord with orderly patterns. These orderly patterns give coherence to sense experiences and spiritual experiences that people can use to check the adequacy of their understanding of reality. This assumption underlies my looking to discourse analysis as a means to help people uncover what orderly patterns a biblical text indicates it is assuming and providing for its presentation of the gospel, and what orderly patterns we are bringing to our interpretation of the gospel. It also underlies what I perceive to be the persuasive and constructive power of Paden's structures of religious world formation.

A fourth assumption (Hiebert 1999:69-81; Meyer 1989:xi-xii; Wright 1992:37; Peacocke 1984:41-45) is that human understanding represents reality through a symbol system that functions like a map, model, or story of reality. People grow in knowledge as the correspondence between their symbol system and reality becomes better attuned. This assumption underlies the process that Dodd's communication model describes and promotes in order to achieve effective intercultural communication outcomes. It also underlies my looking to discourse analysis and Paden's structures of religious world formation as means for people to tune their symbol systems to accord with what they perceive brings better coherence between what a biblical text, sense experiences, and spiritual experiences indicate is reality.

A fifth assumption (Hiebert 1999:88-89) is that there is some commensurability between the symbol systems of different communities. This commensurability is due to people living in the same real world with many common experiences and possibly to other factors as well. They share the same kind of minds and are capable of learning each other's systems of logic. I give expression to this assumption by presuming that people are capable of locating or constructing frames of reference that enable them to hear the import of the gospel for a particular question in their own situation even though a biblical writing expresses that import in a different cultural situation.

A sixth assumption (Hiebert 1999:90-91; Meyer 1989:27) is that people can test the adequacy of different conceptions of reality through comparison, experimentation, and analysis, concluding that one conception or system of conceptions is more adequate than another. This assumption underlies the strategy for Bible interpretation that I am seeking to construct through the contributions of Dodd, Green, and Paden. The strategy is

concerned with providing a process for such comparison, experimentation, and analysis to occur so that a Christian community can test the adequacy of their interpretation of the address of the gospel to a particular issue in their culture and the way they have or have not incorporated it into a specific domain of their religious world. This in turn provides an opportunity for them to become open to the shaping influence of their adjusted understanding of the gospel.

A seventh assumption is that religious symbol systems utilize a number of models to give insights into religious reality.[19] Rather than try to understand a symbol system by finding one model into which all others may be reduced, attention should be given to the interrelationship that diverse models within the symbol system have with each other. This assumption underlies my openness to different cultural communities' finding coherence between the gospel and a diversity of models already present in their symbol system as they utilize a strategy of Bible study and place the gospel into creative relationships that address the gospel to specific issues in their cultures. It also underlies my openness to the possibility that the gospel may be placed by the biblical writings into relationship with a number of diverse models that each contributes insight into what the gospel communicates to us about sacred reality.[20]

Intercultural Conversation

It may be helpful to take a preliminary look at the broad shape of how a complex of contributions from three disciplines might be drawn together into a strategy for doing Bible study. For this look I will utilize the communicative ability of the image of an intercultural conversation.[21] The process of exploring and engaging biblical texts with our own cultural situations is one of interaction with biblical voices from other cultures. An

intercultural conversation with those voices suggests an interpersonal as well as an intercultural process. It orients Bible study towards a process of constructing personal relationships and developing understandings and responses through interactions with those voices, God, and fellow participants in the study. It is open to multiple voices from the local and the broader Christian community participating in the conversation while yet being open to God's voice speaking through biblical texts as the voice with which participants are primarily concerned. It affirms that differences do exist between the cultural horizons of biblical texts and contemporary participants in the Bible study, and that through conversation those horizons can be adequately brought together.

Carley H. Dodd's model of intercultural communication presents contributions for understanding the overall process of an effective intercultural conversation and for constructing environments conducive to it. His model makes clear that intercultural communication requires adaptive communicative behavior to be effective. In order to be motivated to engage in such behavior, people need to become conscious that they are employing different cultural relationships to express and interpret their communication. The model directs us to raise our consciousness that the voices of biblical texts are informed by cultural relationships different from our own to facilitate our effective conversation with them. The model places emphasis on the creation of a communication environment within which this adaptive behavior can be utilized and developed. Such an environment is concerned to develop relationships of trust, respect, and value as a context for effective communication interaction. Within that environment all parties involved in the communication use their interaction as a means to help each other locate, or construct interpretive frameworks that can bring coherence to what the other aims to communicate

and to effectively respond to those aims in mutually beneficial ways. It does not limit the modes of understanding that may be used to pursue this aim. The model thereby directs us to give attention to creating such an adaptive communication environment and to utilize various modes of understanding to locate or construct adequate interpretive frameworks through the conversation. His model further makes clear that the goals of the process of an effective intercultural conversation include relationship building, developing comfort and confidence in interacting with each other, and responding adequately to each other's communicative aims. It directs us to pursue these goals with God, the texts, and each other as we converse with biblical texts.

In the context of the above intercultural conversation, Joel B. Green's adaptation of discourse analysis to Bible study provides a means for people to locate or construct adequate interpretive frameworks and responses to biblical texts. It is a type of inductive Bible study that is concerned to investigate the personal, cultural, and literary relations within which a biblical text has been and is being set, both by the writer of the passage and by those reading it. It encourages reflection on the aims and on the personal, cultural, and literary patterns that can account for the placement of the text into those relations. Green's approach differs from some inductive Bible study approaches by making the communicative aim and function that a biblical text seeks to achieve with us to be the primary question. It also modifies the common linear procedure of observation, interpretation, evaluation, and application, to an interactive one. Green assumes that biblical texts seek for responses from their readers and that this goal requires us to bring our world and situation into interaction with them as a means for perceiving what the texts aim to communicate to us in our world and situation. At the same time, exploration

of the webs of relations within which a biblical text is embedded provides the opportunity for those webs of relations to stimulate and constrain the interpretive frameworks we locate or construct. As will be shown later, the process opens a way for clarifying how inductive analytical method can interact with more intuitive means to understanding.

In the context of the above intercultural conversation, William E. Paden's structures of religious world construction provide significant categories that can help us to perceive and be shaped by the religious aims and interests of biblical texts. Paden holds that sacred narratives, rituals, experiences and patterns of engaging with sacred beings, and systems of purity are socializing structures that construct our understanding of our religious world and the ways to live within it. They identify and locate what is sacred; the power, goals, and values of the sacred; and the relationships the sacred has with us and with all that is in the world. Paden directs us to look for what biblical texts are communicating about these things through these structures. Discerning the patterns and shape that particular religious expressions in a biblical text are giving to their own religious world through these structures provides a means to perceive analogous ways those patterns are shaping or could shape our religious world. The formative power of Paden's four structures also suggests that the religious expressions of biblical texts become creatively active in our own religious worlds as we engage the address of the biblical texts through participation in the structures. We can experience their address and formative power as we imaginatively enter into the narratives expressed or assumed by the texts, we engage the texts within a ritual framework, we socially interact with God as we study the texts, and we seek for pure inward dispositions and behaviors in our religious worlds that are analogically consonant with those present in the texts.

The above is only a sketch of the contributions that Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction can provide for an intercultural conversation strategy of Bible study. More will be said in chapter three about the nature of their contributions and the significance of those contributions for addressing hermeneutical issues. Chapter four will show how they can be shaped into a coherent Bible study strategy that integrates with and empowers the transformational agenda and mission goal of Hiebert's model of critical contextualization.

Methodology

I engaged in library research to survey missiological discussions concerned with contextualization in order to determine what those discussions indicated was necessary for a Bible study strategy that facilitated contextualization. From that survey I determined the breadth of Bible study characteristics that were brought forward and selected representative voices that argued for the merits of particular characteristics. In chapter two I briefly present those representative voices along with some critique of their arguments.

I engaged in library research to survey discussions of biblical hermeneutics in order to determine what issues were being raised regarding people's perception and reception of meaning when they study a biblical text. From that survey I made a typology of issues and clustered them around three basic concerns. I present those issues in the first part of chapter three, along with directions those discussions suggested for addressing them.

I examined material published by Dodd, Green, and Paden about Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction in order to understand the nature, significance, and utility of their strategies. From that study I determined the points where their strategies contributed to an address to the types of issues identified in the survey of biblical hermeneutics. I also examined their writings and the scholars they cited to determine the theoretical and empirical warrants they drew upon to support the addresses their materials give to these issues. I present the results of that research in chapter three.

I examined Hiebert's model of critical contextualization and identified the assumptions and major processes of that model. I identified characteristics of Dodd's, Green's, and Paden's strategies that could relate to and affirm the assumptions and processes of Hiebert's model as well as characteristics that directed modifications and development of it. Using the image of an intercultural conversation and Geertz'ss understanding of religion as a cultural system as a guiding framework, I integrated Dodd, Green, and Paden with Hiebert and each other to construct a coherent strategy for Bible study that facilitates critical contextualization. Through focusing on a strategy for conversationally exploring and engaging with biblical texts, the integration significantly modified and developed Hiebert's model. I present the way I achieved that integration and an explanation of the characteristics and processes of the new strategy in Chapter 4.

I introduced the new Bible study strategy to graduate level students at Asbury Theological Seminary during a four-week intensive class in January 2004. In the first two weeks of the class I provided students through exegetical assignments and group discussions with a series of experiences with different elements of the strategy. Through

readings and class discussions I also led the class in considering various warrants for the strategy. During the second two weeks I divided the class into groups and guided the groups to engage in the entire process of the strategy in relation to a contemporary cultural issue of their choice. My goals were to see to what degree the students could (1) coherently articulate the strategy, (2) utilize the strategy to formulate a critical response to a contemporary issue of their choosing, (3) bring that response into ritual expression, and (4) envision how the strategy could be employed in their own local church communities. I also was looking for reports that students gave regarding the effect that employment of the strategy had upon them. I present a narration of the implementation of the class in chapter five.

I recognized that a graduate seminary class in an intensive four-week term is a situation in which people entering the class might initially have only fragmented or even no community relations with each other. However, one of the goals of the Bible study strategy is to facilitate the development of Christian communal relations among participants so that they increasingly experience interactions with each other as a hermeneutical community. The strategy predicts that through employing it, participants will develop some measure of community with each other, but will also continue to imaginatively engage what they are experiencing through the strategy with the various communities to which they belong.[22] I looked for indications of the Bible study strategy's effect on developing Christian communal relations in the class and providing an experience of hermeneutical community. I also looked for what students reported in regard to their imaginative engagement of their experiences with the various communities to which they belonged. I further looked to see if there were indications that students

could envision from their experience of the strategy how hermeneutical community could be developed through the strategy in other Christian communities to which they belong.

Data that indicated the ability or lack of ability of students to coherently articulate the Bible study strategy was gathered from an essay that students wrote where they were asked to articulate the strategy. Participant observation in class discussions and periodic reflection papers over assigned reading also provided additional data that indicated student ability to articulate the strategy and its constituent elements. Data that indicated the ability or lack of ability of students to utilize the strategy to formulate a critical response to a contemporary issue of their choosing was gathered from a series of short papers students wrote that reported on what they perceived as they worked through the conversations that constitute the strategy. Additional data was gathered from participant observations in class discussions, oral reports to the class on group conclusions, and conversations with students outside of class time. Data that indicated the ability of students to bring their responses into ritual expression was gathered from participating in ritual expressions that students constructed and enacted. Data that indicated how students envision the strategy might be employed in their own local church communities was gathered from an essay they wrote where they were asked to narrate a vision of the way it might take shape in their local church community. Interviews where students were asked how they thought the strategy might be employed in their local communities provided further data on their ability or lack of ability to envision its use.

From this data I constructed and narrated a summary of the ways students were articulating their perception of the Bible study strategy and its effectiveness. I observed the effectiveness and the types of problems the strategy presented in helping them to hear

what response God calls them and their church communities to give to the contemporary issue that they focused attention upon in the class. I constructed and narrated a summary of the ways their ritual expressions interwove biblical texts with what students perceived to be critical responses to contemporary issues. I constructed and narrated a summary of the various ways students were envisioning the strategy could take shape and be used in their local church communities. This provided an initial basis for evaluating the plausibility of students and their local church communities utilizing and being empowered by the Bible study strategy to pursue the goals and aims of critical contextualization. I present these narrations, summaries, and evaluations in chapter five. Conclusions and prospects for future research are presented in chapter six.

Delimitations

This dissertation seeks to examine Carley H. Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Joel B. Green's approach to discourse analysis, and William E. Paden's structures of religious world construction in relation to issues of perception and reception of meaning for the purpose of developing a strategy of Bible study that integrates with and empowers the transformational agenda and mission goal of Paul G. Hiebert's model of critical contextualization. It will not comprehensively survey the history of hermeneutical discussion on perception and reception of meaning, but will limit itself to clarifying and delineating the issues in this discussion that bear on critical contextualization. It will not comprehensively survey the ways that have been presented in the disciplines of intercultural communication, biblical studies, theological studies, and religious studies to respond to the afore mentioned issues, but will limit itself to examining Dodd's, Green's, and Paden's address to these issues and the theoretical and

empirical warrants they employ. The examination of Dodd's, Green's, and Paden's approaches will further be limited to what has bearing on a strategy of Bible study that facilitates the agenda and goal of critical contextualization.

Examination of Hiebert's model of critical contextualization will be limited to its basic assumptions and processes. The dissertation will not provide an extended analysis and critique of the assumptions and processes of Hiebert's model. It will only examine them in relation to the issues regarding perception and reception of meaning identified in contemporary discussions of biblical hermeneutics and in relation to the ways Dodd's, Green's, and Paden's approaches address the issues regarding perception and reception of meaning.

A change in religious worlds is not something that can be measured in short periods of time. The dissertation will therefore not be able to empirically test the effectiveness of the Bible study strategy it constructs to facilitate long term change in a Christian community's religious world. The dissertation will be limited to showing that the elements I identify and take from Dodd, Green, and Paden may be coherently integrated to shape a Bible study strategy that facilitates critical contextualization. Empirical testing of the generalizability of using the strategy will be limited to a demonstration that graduate students are able to articulate and employ the strategy to formulate a critical response to a contemporary issue, bring that response into ritual expression, and envision how the strategy may be employed in their own local church communities. Apart from the ritual expression, actual implementation of the critical response by the students in a long-term transformed engagement with the issue will be beyond the scope of the empirical testing. Evaluation of the demonstration will be limited

to organizing and reporting evidence of how the strategy was articulated and employed by participants, organizing and reporting changes in the content of the structures of participant's religious worlds that participants express, and the possibilities and/or difficulties participants foresee the strategy will encounter if they would use it with their Christian communities in the future.

Limiting the empirical testing to a demonstration with a group of graduate students limits the generalizability of the effectiveness of the strategy to groups of students studying in an academic setting who are influenced by the tradition of western education. Though the strategy pursues the formation of Christian hermeneutical community among those who participate in it, the extent this formation depends upon (or overcomes) structures present in the academic institutional setting will not be tested. The ability of students who have experienced the strategy in an academic setting to employ it in the structures of local churches of various cultures and the effectiveness of the strategy in such employments awaits further research.

Significance

The significance of this study for missiological theory and practice lies in its development of a Bible study strategy that empowers the agenda and goal of Hiebert's process of critical contextualization. It will provide an answer to the question of how biblical texts, written within historical and cultural contexts different from a contemporary Christian community, may be studied and engaged by that community so that they powerfully and formatively speak to questions raised by their particular contexts while retaining an autonomous voice that stimulates and constrains what the community perceives and receives from those texts. It will provide a way for Christian communities

to authentically experience and obediently respond to Jesus Christ through their Bible study, relating the gospel and the church to their life issues, contemporary experience, and contemporary situation. Such a response will facilitate the Christian community's participation in and proclamation of the mission of God to their context.

The study will advance missiological theory by showing a way that a perceived cultural difference model of intercultural communication can integrate with an adaptation of interactional theory in discourse analysis and a theory of religious world construction to guide a strategy of Bible study that directs and empowers changes in community religious worlds in response to the gospel. It provides a way to blend theory and practice, thereby overcoming difficulties in the enlightenment model that has encouraged a separation of theory and practical application into separate steps. It will advance missiological practice by providing a Bible study strategy that effectively addresses the problems that have often hindered Bible study from functioning in a life-forming role. The strategy will provide a means for the Bible to function as normative authority that enables a Christian community to critically evaluate and reshape their existing religious worlds in the light of understandings of the gospel that are stimulated and constrained through Bible study.

NOTES

[1] Chang (1984:116) provides the following example: "For instance, take II Cor. 1:3b-4 (NIV), 'the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.' To understand this passage inductively, we would ask, 'Who wrote these words? When was it? Why did he write these words? Why is the author able to comfort those in trouble? What is the purpose of the trouble that the author went through?' A believer who had similar experience in the past can read this text and exclaim, 'I can understand what it means!' Indeed, his understanding may surpass the exegete who has gone through the sweat and toil of grammatical-historical investigation while never having an existential experience of suffering and comfort from God."

[2] See for example the well known story of the Peace Child (Richardson 1974), where people who valued treachery saw Judas as the hero of the gospel story.

[3] See Wink (1973), Thiselton (1995), and Green (2002a) for reviews of the development of this method and current critiques. Green (2000:32-33) draws attention to Krister Stendahl's (1962:422) statement, "Our only concern is to find out what these words meant when uttered or written by the prophet, the priest, the evangelist, or the apostle – and regardless of their meaning in later stages of religious history, our own included." Green states that Stendahl's distinction between "What did it mean?" and "What does it mean?" became the broadly accepted criteria for distinguishing the task of biblical exegesis to be descriptive and the task of systematic theology to be determining from such description what is prescriptive for Christian life.

[4] Conn (1984:186) observes that the evangelical tradition often follows "the Cartesian distinction between truth and its practice, between abstract theoretical cognition and concrete application. Thus, in exegesis and in communicating the results of exegesis, a narrowed view of hermeneutic has been developed that reduces theology to the ideational and application to the practical. In seminaries this view is reflected in departmental compartmentalization: exegesis is defined as the relatively detached judgment on the text by the Old Testament or New Testament Departments, while the study of the text's "application" becomes the reserve of the Practical Theology Department."

[5] This problem is also acknowledged in *The Bible and Theology in Asia Today* (1982:3). Brown (1984:22) observes that it is easy to keep postponing the jump from thought to action, especially if the action looks risky. We can say to ourselves, "we don't know enough yet."

[6] In Hiebert (1999b:387) he quotes with approval from the Willowbank Report's section on the contextual approach.

[7] In his book *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Hiebert 1985), Hiebert presents the model in relation to issues regarding intercultural communication of the gospel and the construction of local theologies. He presents the model as an alternative to the ways Protestant missionaries have responded to their awareness of cultural pluralism in a widely read article in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Hiebert 1987). It is presented as a way to address popular religions in the chapter he authored for the book, *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission* (Hiebert 1993). The model provides the framework for the development of the book (Hiebert, Shaw, Tiénou 1999b) he co-authored with R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tiénou on a Christian approach to understanding and responding to folk religion. It also appears in articles addressing a meta-theological process (Hiebert 1988), world view transformation (Hiebert 1997), and split-level Christianity/folk religion (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999a).

[8] For example, in Hiebert (1985:193-224) he incorporates critical contextualization into a process where communities are interacting regularly with the Bible. Through these regular interactions communities progressively develop their own theologies that interpret the address of the gospel to their culture and their inherited theological traditions. In Hiebert (1988) critical contextualization is part of an ongoing community process of seeking for adequate translation of biblical texts, critiquing old cultural customs, developing the Christian community into a socio-cultural order that manifests the kingdom of God within their socio-cultural context, and developing theologies that address their cultural context with the gospel while interacting with theological critique from the international community of churches.

[9] Much of Hiebert's published work is concerned to help Christian leaders to develop metacultural frameworks through learning anthropological insights about cross-cultural patterns and how they help us to perceive what particular expressions mean to people and what functions in people's lives they serve. Christian leaders in turn are to help their groups to develop these frameworks as they engage in the process of critical contextualization.

[10] In regard to evaluating meanings in relation to the trajectory of canonical dialog, see Thompson (1996).

[11] Traina (1982:70-73,77) affirms that intuitive means to understanding contributes to interpretation, but he states that further clarification needs to be made in regard to how to integrate such means with the inductive-objective thrust of inductive Bible study.

[12] Skill includes literacy skills (or their lack). Certainly someone in the community needs to be able to read the biblical texts, but do all or many need to have such skills to meaningfully participate?

[13] Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:28-34) present a brief survey of the currents leading the TEF to present the term and some of the evangelical reactions.

[14] The wording of "particular church" is ambiguous. Who is being referred to by this phrase? The leaders of a local church community? All members of a local church community? Is there room for contributions from those who are actively participating in the community, but have a cultural heritage that is different from the majority?

[15] The apostle Paul affirms the local and trans-local nature of Christian community in his opening address to the Corinthians: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours." McGrath (1990:54) states that "the character of the Christian community arises from its historical derivation from the precipitating event of Jesus of Nazareth, and a willingness to let his story govern that community's understanding of its historical situation and future: its attitudes to power, to pride, to loss, to death, to grief, to despair – all are governed by the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament affirmation of the conformity of the believer to Christ – that, through faith, those who believe in Christ are somehow caught up in him, so that his history becomes their history – provides a significant theological foundation for this correlation of narratives. His death is their death, his life is their life – and the narrative of Jesus gives some specification to Christian existence by aligning that existence with a lived life, with a specific historical person."

[16] West (1995:223) states that the participants in the fellowship that have training in theology and biblical studies must resist the temptation to read the Bible for ordinary people and strive to "empower

ordinary readers in the group to discover and then to acknowledge and recognize their own identity and the value and significance of their own categories, contributions, and experiences."

[17] Thiselton (1992:75) states that "theologically a hermeneutic of an embodied text reflects an incarnational Christology, in which revelation operates through the interwovenness of word and deed. It also coheres with a theological account of the role of the community in which their actions and witness give credibility to, and facilitate understanding of, the word which is spoken and read." See Newbigen (1989:227-233) for a discussion of the way that embodiment of the gospel by a hermeneutical community is a "hermeneutic of the gospel" for their surrounding society.

[18] Assumptions and characteristics of critical realism have been widely discussed and draw from numerous sources. Some of the more prominent are Peirce (1955), Barbour (1966, 1974), Lonergan (1957), and Gadamer (1975). For the significance of critical realism to missiology, see Hiebert (1999). For the significance of critical realism to biblical interpretation, see Meyer (1989) and Wright (1992:31-46). For the relation of critical realism to theological models, see Peacocke (1984) and Bevans (1992:24-26). Kraft (1996:18-25) gives a helpful discussion about the interplay between reality and people's perception of reality. My assumptions are indebted to these sources.

[19] Drawing upon Barbour (1974), Bevans (1992:24-26) discusses the relationship between theoretical models and critical realism. In that discussion he argues that theoretical models can be complementary, each disclosing different aspects of a complex reality rather than providing a comprehensive picture of reality. The same may be said for the way religious symbols function as models of reality. Hiebert (1987:109) says much the same thing when he states that critical realism views human knowledge as a map or blueprint that give partial understandings of reality, with the possibility that different maps can be employed in a complementary way.

[20] For example, cf. the models of the kingdom presented in Snyder (1991).

[21] David L. Thompson (1994:28) has suggested the image of a cross-cultural conversation as a way to describe the process of interacting across space and time with biblical texts through the process of inductive Bible study. I have taken my cue from Thompson, but think intercultural conversation more effectively conveys what I have in mind. Cross-cultural conversation suggests a conversation focused on

comparing elements of one culture with another. Intercultural conversation may include comparing, but it suggests people from two or more cultures interacting with each other.

[22] Thiselton (1992:65) argues that even when people interact with the Bible in private, they do so "only in the light of horizons of expectation which have been derived from, and shaped by, the communities to which the individual reader belongs: indeed a community of communities, ranging from the local church and church traditions to learning-processes and assumptions inherited through the family, school, and mass media, contributes decisively to this horizon of expectation."

CHAPTER 2

Missiological Discussion and the Contextual Approach

The introduction of the word "contextualization" by the publication of *Ministry in Context* in 1972 was rapidly followed by discussion in many quarters in regard to what this term might mean for the mission activity of the church, particularly in regard to theologizing, church practices, and theological education.[1] Though stimulated by the introduction of a new term, the discussion was rooted in the long term missionary concern to communicate the Christian faith within different cultural contexts, the felt need of younger churches to more effectively address the cultural issues and situations facing Christians in their cultures, and analyses of the nature of meaning and the application of those analyses to theoretical developments in such fields as philosophy, religion, theology, anthropology, linguistics, communication, etc. The following will survey representatives of significant issues that bear upon Bible study strategy and contextualization that have been raised and have been present in missiological discussion since 1972. One of the criteria I am using for the selection of representatives is their serious commitment to the Bible as in some sense the normative authority for Christian faith and life. My survey focuses on the issues raised by these representatives in regard to how church communities may or should engage the Bible as they are faced with contemporary questions and concerns. I will briefly critique the contributions and limitations of their views in relation to (1) the limitations of linear analytical sequencing, (2) a systematic/cognitive hermeneutic, (3) the historical/cultural horizons of biblical

texts and Christian communities, (4) local and trans-local community participation in interpretation, (5) the location of meaning in the interpretation of biblical texts, and (6) the Bible functioning as normative for Christian faith and life.

Shoki Coe

Shoki Coe introduced the term "contextualization" into missiological discussion through the publication of *Ministry in Context* in 1972. The document (1972:20-21) defined *contextualization* as a dynamic process that is concerned with Christian communities responding to the gospel in terms of their particular cultural situation, taking into account "the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical moment of nations in the Third World." Coe introduced the term as a way to include but go beyond the missiological theme of indigenization with its nuances of incarnating the gospel in a fairly stable and static cultural situation. It was rooted in Coe's experience of the rapidly changing social situation in East Asia, (particularly secularization, urbanization, and industrialization) and the need for the church to come to terms with that situation in order to participate in the *Missio Dei* and give a relevant address to that situation.[2] Coe (1973:238) states that "contextualization" describes the ongoing interplay between a continually changing cultural situation (context) and efforts to reinterpret what the Bible (text) speaks to that situation. In this way he brought up the issue of a need for dialogical engagement between cultural contexts and the Word of God speaking through biblical texts, with changing contexts bringing up new questions and social issues for the Bible to address and to challenge with its own critique.

Tiénou (1993:247) observes that the word "contextualization" conveys the idea that theology can never be permanently developed. Coe's position suggests that questions arising in changing cultural contexts set the agenda for a Bible study strategy that helps church communities to relevantly address their changing contexts with the gospel. It implies that biblical texts are meaningful to contemporary life only as they are brought into coherent relations with questions raised by changing cultural contexts. Conn (1984:191-192) raises a question as to whether this emphasis on how contexts raise questions adequately takes into account the Bible's privilege and duty to judge some questions as participating in the sinfulness of the context. In other words, what role does the Bible play in determining the questions that need to be raised by changing cultural contexts and brought into coherent relations with biblical texts? Since the publication of *Ministry in Context*, the issue of the relation of the Bible to questions arising in *changing* cultural contexts has remained a theme in missiological discussions of contextualization.

Gustavo Gutiérrez

The publication of Gutiérrez's work *A Theology of Liberation* (1973)[3] brought forward the question about how the church can talk about God's love to people living in the suffering and oppression of poverty.[4] He (Gutiérrez 1984:4,7,34-36; 1988:xxxiv,181n.40) answers this question by setting forth a hermeneutical cycle in which the church's commitment to the liberation[5] of the poor (*praxis*)[6] raises questions about the presence and absence of God in the midst of the poor's suffering and oppression. When the church reads the Bible with those questions in mind they discover that the poor are the primary addressees of the Word of God.[7] They discover not only responses to their questions, but also receive calls to faith, prayer, and further

commitment to the liberation of the poor by questions that the Bible raises to them. As they respond in their praxis to these calls, new questions are raised, leading to further interaction with the Bible and theological reflection, leading to further calls for response in their praxis. This hermeneutical cycle becomes both a theological method and a process of spirituality that facilitates the church to move forward in their journey with God and to address the poor in their context with the gospel.[8]

Gutiérrez and the work of other liberation theologians has brought attention to the way that the praxis of the Christian community within a historical situation affects what people perceive God to be saying and doing in the Bible, in their historical situation, and in the Christian community.[9] Dyrness (1990:86) states that whereas Bultmann had argued that all interpretation is influenced by existential self-understanding, liberation theologians argue that it is also influenced by social and political commitment.[10] Through presenting the above cycle, Gutiérrez brings forward the need for people to become converted to a mode of spirituality such as a commitment to the liberation of the poor in order to hear the address of the Word of God to their context. He presents a case for exegeting and interacting with biblical texts from involvement in *praxis* and the basic structures of that praxis (such as prayer and social activities that pursue liberation) rather than detached neutrality. However, his position raises the question of whether what we see through exegesis is only a reflection of our social location and pre-commitments. If exegesis is only such a reflection, it is open to Feuerbach's charge that theology is merely anthropology written large (see Hordern 1983:143).[11] Gutiérrez (1984:34) gives the Word of God more autonomy to address us beyond these limitations, but he does not identify strategies that will facilitate a community's listening to the Bible as an autonomous voice

from God that raises questions beyond what the agendas of their praxis are predisposed to hear.

Carlos Mesters

Carlos Mesters' work with Basic Christian Communities presents an approach to Bible interpretation and contextualization that is focused upon common people forming a community that looks to the Bible for aid in getting a better understanding of life and God's involvement in it.[12] Mesters (1992:44) states that there are "three elements in the common people's interpretation with the Bible: the Bible itself, the community, and reality" (i.e., the real-life situation of the people and the surrounding world). He claims that contextualization does not happen unless all three are present and enter into the process of Bible interpretation. People coming together to engage with each other in relation to real-life problems enables the community to take shape and for the discovery to be made that the Bible is an enormous reinforcement in dealing with their real-life problems. Through reading the Bible they discover that people in the Bible faced problems similar to those faced by the present community. The answers people in the Bible received for their problems from God help the present community to gain a better understanding of life, the place of God in it, and the sense and purpose of what is happening in their history (Mesters 1995:2-3).

Mesters (1992:49-54) states that the Bible is generally read by Base Christian Communities in the context of worship and prayer. It is not read with detached neutrality, but in the context of the community's life with God. Rather than trying to interpret the Bible, the communities are trying to interpret life with the help of the Bible. They discover that the Word of God is in the Bible, in their community, and in their life

situation. This leads to an interweaving of biblical narratives with the narratives of their lives so that they say, "We are Abraham," or "We are in Egypt." The Bible is read as a model history of salvation that gives insight into the contemporary community's history of salvation.

Mesters (1992:55) himself spells out the primary problems with this approach to contextualization through Bible study. It is easy for people to read into the Bible what is not there or only for the sake of confirming their own ideas.[13] They can easily read it without taking account of its cultural distance, as if it was written in the present time, language and culture. Mesters advocates exegesis as a way to guard against this, but he argues that the strategy of Bible study must be oriented to dealing with the questions that the people are raising rather than the questions traditional exegesis raises. Mesters does not make clear what strategy of investigation such an exegesis follows in order to pursue such questions and how it permits diverse members of the community to help each other engage in it. It is also unclear how much room is given for the Bible and for other Christian communities to question the community's life and the questions they are raising.

Daniel von Allmen

Von Allmen's (1975) article on "The Birth of Theology" argues that contextualizing the Christian faith is a necessary concomitant to proclaiming the gospel in new cultural situations. The significance of this point appears when it is set in contrast to missionary strategies that sought to transplant the missionary's culture along with the gospel into new cultural situations. Von Allmen utilized history of traditions research to reconstruct the pattern of contextualization that occurred in the early church as the

Semitic Christian faith made the transition to becoming a Hellenic Christian faith. The main elements in the pattern were the concern of initial Hellenic converts to evangelize Hellenists, their translation of the kerygmatic tradition into terms intelligible to the Greek mind, indigenous worship responses by converted Hellenists, and theological reflection upon these expressions of worship in order to bring necessary correction and order to them so that they remained true to the received kerygmatic tradition.[14] Von Allmen concludes that this pattern presents a biblical precedent and paradigm for contextualization. It shows a way for contemporary churches to navigate a contextualization that avoids shipwreck on the rocks of paternalistic translations of existing theological systems and heretical syncretism that departs from the apostolic kerygmatic tradition.

Von Allmen's article brings forward the question of what is fundamental to the birth of Christian theology and Christian practice in new cultural contexts. His answer focuses on existential engagements with Jesus Christ that are facilitated by indigenous presentations of the kerygmatic narrative and ritual responses to that narrative. Christian theology and Christian practice effectively develops in new cultural contexts as theological reflection tunes contextual interpretations of these engagements to the apostolic kerygma and orders contextual expressions of Christian life into faithful relations with it. His answer draws attention to the often neglected issue of how the kerygmatic narrative, Christian ritual, Christian practices, and existential interactions with God interweave and become formative in the contextualization process. In regard to the relevance of Bible interpretation to contextualization, for von Allmen it appears to lie in providing material from which the apostolic kerygma may be reconstructed, translated,

and heard anew and from which the dynamics for correcting and ordering worship responses in relation to the kerygma may be uncovered.[15]

However, is this is too limited an understanding of the role of Bible study in shaping Christian life? Many Christian communities have interwoven worship, dogma, and ethical practices with a large diversity of narrative, legal, prophetic, and wisdom material in the Bible that extends considerably beyond any reconstruction of the kerygma, though most would see that material in some relation to the kerygma. Also von Allmen's assumption that the apostolic kerygma and the dynamics of its developments can be objectively identified through historical critical methodologies faces challenge from the diversity of reconstructions that have been offered and the way that theological and cultural agendas affect the shape of those reconstructions.[16] Furthermore, von Allmen does not adequately address the influence and significance that already existing expressions of the kerygma and worship have upon what indigenous missionary translators of the Bible perceive to be the content of the kerygma and proper worship, and what they might overlook.[17]

C. René Padilla

Padilla pulls together von Allmen's contention that contextualization is a necessary concomitant to mission, Coe's advocacy of both cultural context and the Bible interacting and raising questions for each other, liberation theology's advocacy of a hermeneutical circle, and the Basic Christian Communities movement's concern to make the Bible an open book for the poor. He (Padilla 1979) has proposed an alternative hermeneutical circle that is concerned to address the dreams, anxieties, questions, problems, values, and customs of people. The goal of the hermeneutical circle is the

transposition of "the biblical message from its original context into the context of the modern readers or hearers so as to produce in them the same kind of impact that the message was meant to produce in the original readers or hearers."[18] Padilla (1979:104) states, "God's purpose in speaking through Scripture is not to provide a basis for theological systems, but to shape a new humanity created in the image of Jesus Christ."

Padilla's hermeneutical circle seeks to balance two assumptions: (1) the horizon of the historical context of the biblical text has enough in common with the horizon of the historical situation of contemporary readers/hearers that the message of the biblical text can be appropriated into the contemporary situation; and (2) the message of the biblical text can only be understood in the light of its original context. In simplified terms, the circle depicts a dialogue in which the readers/hearers of the Bible approach the biblical text with questions raised in their particular situation and formulated through their worldview. They then seek to respond to their particular situation in the light of the theological comprehension they develop through their listening to the biblical text. This in turn raises fresh or refined questions with which they approach the biblical text and which enables them to comprehend deeper insights from the biblical text regarding how to respond as Christians in their particular situation. As they keep cycling through this dialogical process the horizons of the biblical text and their contemporary situation merge and life in their historical situation becomes transformed by the message of the biblical text.

Padilla (1979:99) holds that the Bible does not answer questions that are not posed to it. For the message of the biblical text to transform the historical situation of people, questions from those historical situations must be raised. The more fundamental

the questions raised are to their life concerns, the more relevant the biblical message can become to their lives. Padilla therefore argues that within the hermeneutical circle people need to seek for better understanding of the issues and dynamics of their own historical situation and worldview. For true dialogue to occur, they also need to be open to both the answers and the questions that the biblical text raises to their questions, historical situation and worldview and to respond to their historical situation in obedience to God.[19] He (1979:96) sees grammatico-historical exegesis as providing a necessary means for listening to what the text says without imposing upon it a ready-made interpretation. However, such exegesis must be pursued from a position of faith that seeks for the Spirit of God to illuminate what the message of the text means for people in their present context. As people respond in obedience to the message, continually interacting their understanding of the biblical text with their understanding of their concrete situation the gospel becomes increasingly contextualized and visible in the life of the church.[20]

Padilla's proposal places before us the issue that the horizons of biblical texts are historically and culturally distant, yet can and need to be brought together with the horizons of the particular historical situation of contemporary readers/hearers so that the gospel actually transforms their historical situation. More needs to be said however about how the dialogue of this hermeneutical circle can be facilitated and be effective. Are there structures that provide means for people to bring answers perceived through this dialogue into vital shaping influences in their religious worlds? What type of environments must be created for this kind of dialogue to develop? Do Christian leaders function as intermediaries for the community in the dialog of questions and answers, or are all members of the community participating in the exegesis and in the determination

of contextual response? In regard to grammatico-historical exegesis, Padilla (1979:87) himself recognizes it has often been pursued from a perspective that seeks to define the original meaning of the biblical text with an objectivity that cannot be attained. What adjustments in employing the method need to be made so that it helps a community bring into focus what a text means for the present life of the community without losing the stimulating and constraining influence of grammatical and historical relationships within which the writer and the biblical canon have set the text? Even if people utilize grammatico-historical exegesis from a position of faith that seeks for the Spirit of God to illuminate the message of the text for the contemporary situation, what else is or needs to be involved so that it contributes to the merging rather than the separating of horizons?

Charles Kraft

In his book *Christianity in Culture*, Kraft (1979) draws upon models from the fields of anthropology, communication, and linguistics to propose a way for contemporary Christianity to regain what he perceives to be the dynamic of apostolic faith that works with God in the transformation of culture. He writes from the context of his own missionary experience in which he observed the failure of western academic approaches to biblical interpretation and theologizing to connect with the life issues that leaders of non-western Christian communities perceived to be of primary importance. Kraft (1979:178-186) interprets theologizing as a *dynamic* process founded upon God's stimulation of people (often through a Spirit-led person) to receive insight into the revelational meaning of information that is or has been made available to them in particular cultural forms. This information includes both what has often been termed general revelation and special revelation. He (Kraft 1979:143-146) conceives of the

dynamic process along the lines proposed by Padilla (1979) so that there is an ongoing dialogue between issues raised in contemporary life and the reading of the biblical text. He (Kraft 1979:194-215) argues that the Bible provides the classic casebook through which the constancy of God's method in communicating with people and God's normative message may be discerned. God's method is one of receptor-oriented communication in which God uses local cultural forms to stimulate the perception of the message among recipients of the communication and impacting them with a call to respond to it. The message is supra-cultural, remaining constant in each cultural form in which it has been encased, yet with each particular cultural expression of it stimulating new insight and/or perspective into its meaning. The dynamic process of theologizing (Kraft 1979:291-297) should imitate the same kind of encasement we see in the Bible of the constant supra-cultural message. It should pursue the goal of enabling a contemporary Christian community to bring the message of the Bible into expression in contemporary cultural forms that impact that culture.

In Kraft's proposal, Bible study strategy embraces but goes beyond the grammatico-historical method by utilizing insights from anthropology, communication theory, and linguistics to study the broader contexts that encase the biblical message and that contemporary recipients bring to their interpretation of it. Through examining these contexts contemporary recipients are stimulated by God to perceive the supra-cultural message expressed in its various encasements in the Bible and how to bring that message into expression in the contemporary context.[21] They are also stimulated to perceive that God often begins with a less than ideal cultural form to call people to commit to following God and then gradually unfolds to people what allegiance to God means in

widening domains of their cultural life. As they seek to do the same through their theological reflection, the biblical encasements of the message provide a "tether" that keeps new and always imperfect cultural formulations of God's meanings within an acceptable range of distortion.

Kraft's proposal draws attention to the positive role that cultural context plays in providing a lens through which people perceive meaning. The particularity of the cultural contexts of biblical texts and contemporary situations are the means the Spirit of God uses to stimulate and constrain what lens people will use to perceive what he calls the supra-cultural message presented by the texts. The same Spirit of God provides insights through that particularity into how that message may be reformulated to speak to and to be obeyed in contemporary life. However, what exactly does Kraft mean by a supra-cultural message? What role do traditional formulations play in guiding our perception of it? In what ways do the encasements of that message in biblical texts provide stimulations and constraints that tether our cultural encasements of the supra-cultural message? Are there structures (such as narrative, ritual, boundaries of behavior, and interactions with God) that facilitate the entry and shaping influence of the perceived biblical message into the religious worlds of contemporary Christians? Is the language of perceiving the supra-cultural message the best way to conceptualize the way to structure our engagements with biblical texts? What kinds of dynamics create environments that are conducive to the dynamic interaction between the study of biblical texts and their interpretation for the lives of contemporary Christians that Kraft advocates?

J. Severino Croatto

Croatto (1987) is concerned to theoretically establish that biblical texts have the capacity to address communities of faith whose interests, concerns, and culture are quite distant from the authors and the first addressees of those texts. He writes from the context of supporting the authenticity of interpretations made by liberation theologians from the perspective of their sociological analyses and the interpretations made by Base Christian Communities from the perspective of their faith experiences. He argues that all texts have a reservoir of possible meanings that include but also go beyond what their original authors could envision. These possible meanings emerge as interpreters read texts from the vantage point of their own life situations. For example, the call of Jesus in Matthew 16:24 for a person who would come after him to take up his/her cross and follow him keeps receiving new particular content as it is heard and responded to by Christians in different cultural contexts. Though the original authors had particular meanings in mind and wrote their texts in webs of literary and historical relationships to communicate that meaning to the recipients of their writings, the publishing of their writings removes the authors from any further control over the meaning recipients might perceive in the writings. Their writings become open to a wealth of meanings that later readers can produce from their texts.

Croatto does not mean by this that readers of the text can give the text any meaning that they desire and remain authentic to the text. The text as it has been set in webs of literary and historical relationships indicates limits to what it can possibly mean.[22] Croatto does argue that within the limits imposed upon readers by these webs readers can utilize their own faith experiences, analyses, and commitments to enable

them to perceive and produce meanings from the text that speak to their contemporary situation. He (Croatto 1987:70) goes so far as to say that "we must *re-create* the message of the Bible, not just 'update' it." Croatto (1987:1,15-22) holds that any interpretation of a text enlarges the meaning of the text as the interests, concerns, and culture of a community draws forth meaning from the capacity of the text.

Croatto's argument about the capacity of biblical texts to address communities of faith who are historically and culturally distant from the authors and first recipients of the texts helps to make clear the advantage of engaging texts from the perspective of the interests, concerns and culture of a contemporary community rather than a detached neutrality.[23] New perspectives and cultural engagements make it possible for previously unseen or neglected dimensions of a text to be disclosed. Croatto's attention to the way that the webs of historical and literary relationships within which a text has been placed gives direction and places limits on what meaning a community can authentically give to a text is also helpful. Croatto does not make clear an exegetical strategy that empowers those webs of relationships to give this direction and to exert those limits on a community's interpretation. What strategy will facilitate a community's listening to the texts as an autonomous voice from God giving direction to their lives? There is always a danger of people limiting their engagement with biblical texts to a means for legitimating a *praxis* that they already have chosen on other grounds.

Hesselgrave and Rommen

Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:145-149, 201-211) bring forward the issue that authentic contextualization must recognize the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. They follow Nicholls' (1975:647) definition of contextualization as "the translation of the

unchanging content of the gospel of the Kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situation." They see this unchanging content of the gospel to be a biblical system of truth that has repeatedly been embraced by historic Christian orthodoxy. Christians who attempt to contextualize the gospel must give careful attention to both discerning the system of truth that biblical texts intend to express and to what is necessary for that meaning to be received and responded to by people in the contemporary culture at hand.

Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:211) hold that biblical interpretation is a linear analytical process that is best done by "persons who are expert in the cultures and languages involved, who understand cultural dynamics, and who are themselves bicultural." They recognize that interpreters are culturally distant from biblical texts and that they are affected by ethnocentric biases and distorting effects of sin that can hinder their perception of the meaning that biblical texts were intended to express. However, they also argue that this distance and these biases can be largely overcome through careful attention to the constraints of semantic relationships and general cultural patterns that give clues to the intended meaning. They (1989:161-169) see the task of contextualization is for interpreters to match semantic relationships and categories of knowledge expressing meaning in the Bible with those that will express that meaning to people living in the cultural situation at hand. They affirm that the universality of basic categories of meaning and semantic relationships that exist in languages make it possible for such matches to be made.

Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:172-175,202) hold that some truths expressed in the Bible have a categorical validity for all cultures. Forms and meanings are closely tied

together and close cultural correspondences must be found and utilized to express their meaning for each culture. Other truths have a principial validity that will take on different expressions in changing cultural and social situations. Culture comes into play more significantly in the contextualization of biblical truths that have principial validity.

While Hesselgrave and Rommen's approach keeps the Bible in an authoritative role for addressing contemporary culture, it tends to bracket off an address of the gospel to issues in contemporary culture that are beyond the purview of historic Christian orthodoxy. It assumes that the Bible itself contains a system of propositional truths awaiting discernment through exegetical study. Such an assumption faces the challenge of the many diverse non-propositional modes of literature present in the Bible and the way contemporary culture affects the abstraction and systematization of propositions from that literature by contemporary interpreters.[24] Its focus on cognitive analytical modes of engagement with the Bible may also hinder people from affective and volitional responses to the gospel in their daily affairs. It tends to give elite status to those who are expert in analyzing language and culture, hindering communal participation in Bible interpretation and providing a dominating role for the agenda of the expert.[25]

William A. Dyrness

Dyrness (1985; 1990:24-34) presents what he calls an interactional model of contextualization. The model utilizes Schreiter's (1985:25) diagram for constructing local theologies, with the substitution of the Bible for the roles Schreiter gives to church tradition. It in some ways develops the hermeneutical circle of Padilla's model. Fundamental to the model is Dyrness' (1985) contention that the experience of people with the reality of God through their encounter with biblical texts is what enables them to

more clearly judge the meaning of those biblical texts for their lives. Much of this experience is something that cannot be fully articulated. It is received as the Holy Spirit enlightens readers of biblical texts through diverse modes of communication that both employ the mind-sets and cultural dispositions that readers bring to their reading and encounters readers with the call of a personal God to conversion.

Dyrness holds that the process of the model is set into motion by the initial preaching of evangelists and missionaries that encounters people with the call of God and leads to an experience of conversion. For the process of the model to continue and to lead to contextualization, Christian believers must continue to read and obey the Bible in relation to their experience of the reality of God in their cultural and personal situation. Through various means of analysis believers seek to become conscious of their deep-seated cultural and personal needs and aspirations and bring them to their reading of biblical texts. As they encounter parallel themes in the Bible a dialogue ensues in which believers question and are questioned by the Bible in relation to these themes. Contextualization takes place as believers respond with faith and obedience to the call of God, embodying the truth of what they hear the Bible speaking to these themes. This experience in turn stimulates both the construction of contextual theology that addresses the contemporary culture and a re-reading of the Bible. Through this re-reading of the Bible the interaction between parallel themes in the Bible and contemporary culture commences again.

Dyrness urges through this model that the authority of the Bible only emerges as it leads to believers' obedience to the Bible in relation to realities of life in the contemporary culture. The Bible becomes a means for interpreting contemporary life and

for drawing people into a hearing of and a life within God's story. Obedience is a necessary means to progress in hearing and interpreting what God is saying to contemporary life. Dyrness observes that such obedience will set in motion a process where believers and the believers' culture become increasingly addressed by the gospel. He (1985:172) states that the process is carried on in the midst of community interactions that call all the varied gifts of the body of Christ to become employed in the process.

Dyrness does not clearly indicate how themes will be uncovered in the contemporary culture and in the Bible so that they may be brought into interaction with each other. He recognizes the significance of utilizing more than analytical modes for engaging with biblical texts, but he does not make clear how other modes may be engaged. He recognizes the importance of involving the whole Christian community in the process of biblical interpretation, and sees the role of professional exegetes as helping Christians to learn to read the Bible for themselves and as providing perspectives from the broader Christian community that can limit individual excesses in interpretation. He does not elaborate, however on what can facilitate this type of community involvement in engaging with and interpreting biblical texts.

Concluding Thoughts

As the above survey indicates, missiological discussions of contextualization have widely recognized Coe's concern for Bible study to engage questions arising in the changing cultural contexts of contemporary Christian communities. As various authors have investigated what it means for Bible study to engage such questions a complex of inter-related issues concerned with the perception and reception of meaning has emerged. Many have brought to our attention that the social location of a Christian community

affects what people in those communities will perceive biblical texts to be saying to their contemporary lives and their reception of the relevancy of that message/those messages to their lives. In connection with this Gutierrez argues that the praxis of the community such as a commitment to liberation of the poor opens people to hear the many ways biblical texts address the poor and the questions about God raised by their suffering. Mesters states that people in the Base Christian Communities interweave their lives with biblical texts as they study them in connection with the real life situations they encounter in their social location. Kraft maintains that the particularity of contemporary cultural locations and the cultural contexts of biblical texts are the channels the Spirit of God uses to stimulate and constrain what lens people will use to perceive what he calls the supra-cultural message presented by the texts.

Several scholars have emphasized that Christians joined in community provide a necessary environment for people to perceive, receive, and respond to meaning. Mesters states that within Base Christian Communities the Bible is studied in the context of community prayer and worship, and that contextualization will not occur unless the Bible, the community, and real life situations are all interacting in the study. Von Allmen argues that the community's response to the kerygmatic narrative in worship is a necessary element for people to experience existential engagements with Jesus Christ. Dyrness holds that the process of contextualization occurs in the midst of community interactions that call all the varied gifts of the body of Christ to become employed in the process, and that the involvement of the whole Christian community provides checks on excesses in interpreting the Bible.

A number of scholars have made the case that the historical/cultural particularity of biblical texts is the means rather than the barrier for Christians to perceive the message(s) of biblical texts for their contemporary lives. Mesters focuses on the biblical narratives that people connect and then interweave with their own life narratives. Kraft argues that study of the cultural contexts that encase biblical texts stimulate people to perceive the supra-cultural message that they encase. Padilla holds that the horizon of the historical context of the biblical text has enough in common with the horizon of the historical situation of contemporary readers/hearers that the message of the biblical text can be appropriated into the contemporary situation, and that the message of the biblical text can only be understood in the light of its original context. Hesselgrave and Rommen claim that it is possible for experts to match semantic relationships and categories of knowledge expressing meaning in the Bible with those that will express that meaning to people living in the cultural situation at hand. Croatto argues that biblical texts have the capacity to speak to new situations while retaining continuity with textual and historical relationships within which the biblical writers and the canon set them.

Several scholars have offered hermeneutical cycles that provide a process for communities to tune or develop their perception and reception of the meaning of biblical texts. Gutierrez argues for a cycle of *praxis*, biblical study from the lens of reflection on *praxis* and further *praxis* in response to that biblical study and reflection. Padilla presents a dialogical cycle of raising contemporary questions, biblical study seeking God's response to those questions, and the asking of new or refined questions as comprehension increases. Dyrness offers an interactive cycle where people hear and experience God through preaching, respond in obedience, examine the Bible for themes that parallel their

life situations, respond in obedience to those themes, and further examine the Bible for parallel themes raised by their obedience.

Hiebert's model of critical contextualization responds to many of the issues that the above discussion has brought forth. It presents a way for Bible study to engage questions arising in the changing cultural contexts of contemporary Christian communities. It exhibits a concern for social location by guiding Christians to carefully examine particular beliefs and practices in their cultural situation that people in their communities associate with a specific question at hand and to engage in Bible study that interacts with their social location. It involves the Christian community throughout its entire process, interpreting together what the Bible says to their issues, determining and enacting together appropriate ritual and ministry responses. Though the schemata of the model does not present a cycle, Hiebert sets the model within an ongoing community process of discipleship that implies a cyclic revisitation of issues as well as an expansion into new issues that the community becomes aware need addressing.

The critiques offered in the above survey indicate that there is still a need to chart a strategy of Bible study that adequately addresses all of the issues that have been brought forth in the discussion. The question of how biblical texts, written within historical and cultural contexts different from our own, may be studied and engaged so that they powerfully and formatively speak to questions raised by particular social locations while retaining an autonomous voice that stimulates and constrains what we perceive and receive from those texts, needs to be further investigated.

NOTES

[1] For example, see Kato (1975), Nicholls (1975), Conn (1977), Buswell, III (1978), Ericson (1978), Fleming (1980), Haleblian (1983), Taber (1983), Schreiter (1985), Hiebert (1987), Ukpong (1987a), Ukpong (1987b), Stackhouse (1988), Gilliland, Ed. (1989), Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989), Ikenga-Metuh (1989), Bevans (1992). Note also the rise (and the demise) in the 1970s of the journal *The Gospel in Context.*

[2] For an account of the roots of the term in Coe's experience, see Wheeler (2002).

[3] The book was first published in Spanish in 1971 under the title *Teologia de la liberacion*. It was preceded by a paper he presented in 1968 at the *Encuentro Nacional del Movimiento Sacerdotal ONIS* in Chimbote, Peru. Segundo (1983:2) observes that the distinctive features of liberation theology were already being developed by theologians in Latin America ten years prior to the publication of Gutiérrez' book. Gutiérrez' later writings provide further elaboration and nuance to the major tenants and methodology of his approach. The introduction and footnotes to the 1988 revision of *A Theology of Liberation* and the book *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (1984) are particularly helpful for grasping his perspective on Bible interpretation and its relation to contextualizing theology and the mission of the church in the Latin American situation.

[4] Gutiérrez (1988: xxxiv) states, "Among us the great pastoral, and therefore theological, question is: How is it possible to tell the poor, who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial of love, that God loves them? This is equivalent to asking: How can we find a way of talking about God amid the suffering and oppression that is the experience of the Latin American poor?"

[5] Gutiérrez (1988:xxxviii) conceives of this liberation in a comprehensive way that includes liberation of the poor from oppressive socio-economic structures, personal transformation that enables people to live with inner freedom regardless of their circumstances, and liberation from sin (which he defines as all that breaks our friendship with God and other human beings).

[6] *Praxis* does not refer simply to the practice of the Christian community, but to the practice of the Christian community as it embodies or is linked to a particular ideological commitment. Such a commitment might be to an ideology (including a theology) that supports what Segundo (1983:6) calls a

"cult of suffering and fatalism" that he perceives to be widespread among Latin American Christians and as issuing in a *heteropraxis*. For liberation theologians, a conversion to a commitment to liberate the poor includes a shift in ideology to one that is more faithful to the gospel and the humanization of all people and supports liberative activity, i.e. *orthopraxis*.

[7] Gibbs (1996:275-276) states that there is some ambiguity in Gutiérrez' writings as to the referent for the expression "word of God." At times it appears to refer to the Bible, but Gibbs believes that even at such times it means "'the Lord's living word' communicated through the mediation of human words." Gutiérrez' concern appears to be with the word of the Lord encountering his people through the Scripture, the lived faith of the Christian community committed to liberation, and the activity of God in human history. Gibbs (1996:272) observes that "Gutiérrez finds in the situation of the poor the questions that he puts to the scriptural text; questions concerning justice for the suffering innocent; questions concerning divine retribution and the interpretation of misfortune as God's punishment for moral wrongdoing. His initial theological silence allows him to hear the questions from Christian praxis that theology seeks to answer." Gibbs (1996:272-273) also states that "Gutiérrez maintains that the poor are the primary addressees of the word. God continues to inspire hope and the determination to overcome evil in all its forms. God's word in Christ reveals a God of hope and life who loves the poor precisely because they are poor and living in inhuman situations. The scorned of this world are those whom the God of love prefers. This is seen particularly in Jesus through whom God enters into loving solidarity with those who suffer in order to lead them beyond suffering to new life. Only by living the mystery of the cross can one find the light of Easter."

[8] Dyrness (1990:105-106) interprets Gutiérrez to be saying that genuine life with God is found primarily in the commitment to Christ that issues in the practice of liberation rather than in the practice of liberation in and of itself. Life in the community of faith that is committed to Christ becomes the location for seeing and experiencing God and for reflecting on Scripture from the perspective of that location.

[9] Segundo (1976:8-9) states that new questions and problems arising from *praxis* must lead to new interpretations of the Scriptures, taking into account data in the Scriptures that have previously been overlooked. If interpretation of the Scriptures "does not change along with the problems, then the latter will go unanswered; or worse, they will receive old, conservative, unserviceable answers."

[10] Dyrness (1990:86) observes that such a position follows along with current assumptions in the sociology of knowledge that "all thought arises out of a social context and inevitably bears the marks of that setting." The liberation theologian Juan Segundo (1976:8) makes this explicit by stating, "Everything involving ideas is intimately bound up with the existing social situation in at least an unconscious way."

[11] Segundo (1976:33) seems to go in this direction when he argues, "Partiality is justified because we must find, and designate as the word of God, that part of divine revelation which *today*, in the light of our concrete historical situation, is most useful for the liberation to which God summons us."

[12] Such communities often take a number of years to form. Barbe (1992) describes a six stage process that he uses to stimulate their formation: living together; prayer; restoring a voice to the people; restoring action to the people; the expansion of ministries; toward collective action.

[13] It seems to me that the example presented in Gallo (1988:100-101) illustrates this danger.

[14] Citing C.H. Dodd (1936), Von Allmen (1975:40) understands the kerygmatic tradition to be summaries of the apostolic preaching of the gospel that the early church formulated to guide others in their preaching.

[15] Von Allmen (1975:51) states, "Rather than teach a theology (even a theology that claims to be a 'New Testament theology'), what we should try to do is to point out what the forces were that governed the elaboration of a theology on the basis of the material furnished by the primitive church. This is the reason why, in my opinion, the study of the history of traditions in the early church is of capital importance in Africa even more than elsewhere."

[16] See Carson (1984) for an extended critique of von Allmen's historical reconstruction.

[17] In a response to von Allmen's article, Samuel K. Ada (von Allmen 1975:53) argues that indigenous missionaries already had an implicit theology that molded their teaching and the hymns and prayers of the community. This challenges what appears to be von Allmen's assumption that we can start afresh with the apostolic kerygma to construct contextual expressions of worship and theology in new cultural contexts, ignoring the powerful influence of expressions in other earlier cultural contexts that have already been shaping the indigenous missionary.

[18] This goal is similar to the goal of dynamic equivalent translation advocated by Nida and Taber (1969:24).

[19] "The Willowbank Report" (1979:439) substantially adopted Padilla's position. It states, "Today's readers cannot come to the text in a personal vacuum, and should not try to. Instead, they should come with an awareness of concerns stemming from their cultural background, personal situation, and responsibility to others. These concerns will influence the questions which are put to the Scriptures. What is received back, however, will not be answers only, but more questions. As we address Scripture, Scripture addresses us. We find that our culturally conditioned presuppositions are being challenged and our questions corrected. In fact, we are compelled to reformulate our previous questions and to ask fresh ones. So the living interaction proceeds."

[20] Padilla (1983:79-80) summarizes his position by affirming that his circle presupposes a communal, pneumatic, contextual, and missiological hermeneutic. His elaboration of what this means lines up closely with the statement in The Seoul Declaration (1983:10): "A biblical foundation for theology presupposes the church as the hermeneutical community, the witness of the Holy Spirit as the key to the comprehension of the Word of God, and contextualization as the New Testament pattern for transposing the gospel into different historical situations. We affirm that theology as a purely academic discipline is something we must neither pursue nor import. To be biblical, Evangelical theology must depend on sound exegesis, seek to edify the body of Christ, and motivate it for mission. Biblical theology has to be actualized in the servanthood of a worshipping and witnessing community called to make the Word of God live in our contemporary situations."

[21] This seems quite similar to von Allmen's turning to the Bible to discern a normative message and a normative pattern for bringing it into new cultural expression and development. Unlike von Allmen, Kraft does not identify the normative message with an apostolic kerygma reconstructed through critical methodology. I am not sure what Kraft's referent is when he speaks of the supra-cultural message. This may be due to the inadequacy of the language mode and the categories Kraft is employing to express what he has in mind. Kraft also differs from von Allmen in that he does not focus on the pattern of kerygma, worship response, and theological reflection upon the worship response as the biblical pattern for contextualization, but rather focuses upon the dynamics of incarnation that he analyzes through

methodologies used in anthropology, communication studies, and linguistics as a model for contextualization.

[22] Croatto (1987:67) states, "a 'faith-full' theological rereading, for its part, is conditioned by the structure, codes, and polysemy of the text (and not by some random polysemy!), which it must tirelessly explore." He further states (1987:80), "textual polysemy does not mean simply what-you-will. A text says what it permits to be said. Its polysemy arises from its previous closure."

[23] Croatto (1987:68-69) states that when "the Bible is read from out of sociohistorical reality-political, economic, cultural, religious, and the like-it reveals dimensions not previously seen, helped by beams of light not captured in earlier readings. What is unsaid in what a text 'says' is said in a contextualized interpretation. This is the heart of the hermeneutic act, and a synthesis, as it were, of the results of my analysis up to this point."

[24] Dyrness (1985:164-165) states, "Because of the particular intellectual heritage that we enjoy in the West, we have come to believe that propositional statements are the purest form of truth. In fact, however, the proposition most often reflects the abstraction of truth from its circumstantial expression." Dyrness draws attention to the ways that biblical narrative engages the narratives of our lives and the call of God to conversion we receive through that engagement.

[25] Grant R. Osborne (1991) presents a comprehensively developed form of Hesselgrave and Rommen's approach.

CHAPTER 3

Perception and Reception of Meaning

The conclusion of the review of missiological discussion concerning Bible study strategy and contextualization identified a number of issues that have bearing on the meaning people perceive and receive[1] as they engage in Bible study. The social location of the readers, the environment of communal activity and interaction, the historical and cultural particularity of biblical texts, and interactive or circular processes that go back and forth between contemporary life situations and Bible study have all been brought forward as significantly affecting the meaning people perceive and receive. In various ways they have been advocated as necessary ingredients for a Bible study practice that facilitates transformation of religious worlds.

However, the utilization of these ingredients does not automatically make a Bible study strategy transforming. Discussions in biblical hermeneutics have raised a number of issues regarding perception and reception of meaning that are related to these ingredients. Such issues need to be addressed by a Bible study strategy that seeks for the gospel to shape religious worlds. The following will make clear the nature and pertinence of the issues that have been raised. It will then show how contributions from Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction present theoretically and empirically warranted ways of addressing those issues.

Biblical Hermeneutics and Meaning

Hermeneutical discussion in the last fifty years has brought forward a complex array of issues regarding where meaning resides, what influences the meaning people perceive, and how people receive that meaning as a transforming influence in their religious worlds. These issues may be clustered around three concerns: (1) the aims and interests people pursue, both consciously and unconsciously, when they study the Bible; (2) the distance between the horizons of biblical texts from the horizons of contemporary readers; and (3) the modes through which people engage biblical texts. In interpretive practice, positions taken in relation to these concerns are not isolated from each other but interweave in numerous ways. The following will examine issues raised by these concerns and make clear their bearing on the meaning people perceive and receive when they read or hear biblical texts.

People's Aims and Interests

Readings of the Bible from different personal, socio-cultural, ecclesial, and theological locations have made it clear that there are no neutral readings of the Bible. Every interpretation is affected in part by the aims and interests that readers bring to their engagement with the biblical text. The review of missiological discussion has already indicated the positive role that aims and interests can play in enabling perception of meaning. A good example is Gutiérrez's claim that when the church reads the Bible with questions about the presence and absence of God in the midst of the poor's suffering and oppression, they discover that the poor are the primary addressees of the Word of God. Green (1995c:417-418) observes that it often takes people with aims and interests different from our own to alert us to the significance of data we have overlooked and the

perception of meaning that is stimulated when that data is taken into account. Hearing readings of the Bible with different aims and interests can thus broaden and enrich our perception of meaning.[2] However, it can also create conflicts between perceptions of meaning.

Robert Morgan (1988:8) observes that "some disagreements about what the Bible means stem not from obscurities in the texts, but from conflicting aims of the interpreters." Anthony C. Thiselton (1992:588) notes that the interests of interpreters can affect the meaning people perceive to the extent that many right-wing conservatives and left-wing radicals feel like they can predict the results of biblical exegesis by "*socio-political typifications* of 'conservative', 'neo-liberal', 'radical', 'historical-critical', 'moderate', or 'pleasing the Board and the Constituency' goals of interpretation." The aims and interests that people bring to their study of the Bible influences such things as the contexts they examine, the questions they ask, and the resources they bring into interaction with the biblical text. It affects what textual phenomena are noticed and assessments of their relevance, importance, and validity.

Three different interpretations of the episode of Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:4-42) illustrate the way that aims and interests affects what people perceive. In his commentary *The Gospel According to John*, Leon Morris (1971) pursues the aim of showing the historicity of the events presented in the Gospel and the meaning that words and events would have in their historical and literary context.[3] Comments sprinkled throughout his commentary suggest that he pursues this aim with conservative evangelical interests, such as supporting (and perhaps clarifying) orthodox doctrine and encouraging faith in Christ as personal savior. Morris (1971:254-

285) perceives the episode at the well to be an actual historical event that presents the mission of Jesus to bring eternal life to all people, including the Samaritans who were hated by the Jews. He understands Jesus' interaction with the woman as personal evangelism. Jesus breaks with Jewish sensibilities and initiates interaction with the Samaritan woman, asking her for a drink. Through their interaction, particularly through Jesus revealing his knowledge of her sinful marital situation, Jesus brings the woman to faith that he is the Messiah. Her testimony in turn kindles faith among others in her town. Jesus stays for two more days with the result that more believe and come to know that he is the savior of the world.

In keeping with his aims and interests, the contexts Morris brings into play to arrive at this interpretation are largely historical, literary, and grammatical. He pays attention to the historical use of words and grammar, geographical features, historical customs that suggest a backdrop, relations with other parts of the Gospel of John, and parallels and contrasts with literature he considers to be present in the milieu. Though he does not directly acknowledge it, his periodic comments about the woman's motivation and emotional responses as she participates in the dialog suggests his employment of a personal evangelism narrative as a significant interpretive context.[4] Morris perceives Jesus to be moving the woman from resistance to faith.

Sandra M. Schneiders (1995) pursues the aim of exposing and critiquing the ideology that dominates most interpretations of the text and constructing an alternative interpretation that realizes the liberating potential of the text for women and for society. She pursues this aim with feminist interests in liberating oppressed women through the transformation of society, liberating the biblical text from its participation in the

oppression of women, and transforming the church from supporting the oppression of women to the discipleship of equals. Based on the silence of the Synoptic Gospels in regard to a Samaritan mission and the recounting of what appears to be the first evangelism of the Samaritans in Acts 8, Schneiders understands the episode to be a symbolic encounter rather than a historical one. She further supports this by the implausibility of a peasant woman marrying and divorcing five times. She perceives the purpose of the story to be the recognition of marginalized Samaritan Christians as full disciples and the establishment of the equality of the Samaritan Christians with the Jewish Christians in the Johannine community. The dialogue between Jesus and the woman is understood as the New Bridegroom (Jesus) "wooing" Samaria (the woman) to enter into full covenant fidelity in the New Israel. The dialogue reveals to the woman Jesus' messianic identity in terms of Samaritan theology. Jesus presents himself as one greater than the patriarch Jacob, as the new prophet like Moses who reveals true worship that transcends Jewish and Samaritan divisions, and as the "I am" of the Mosaic revelation.

The contexts Schneiders examines and employs to arrive at her interpretation are largely literary and intertextual. She observes how the episode follows a biblical pattern of meeting future spouses at a well (Genesis 24:10-61; 29:1-20; Exodus 2:16-22). She sees the location of the episode in a Cana to Cana sequence (John 2-4) which includes the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and John's words about bride and bridegroom (John 3:27ff.) to be further support for the possibility of a marital "wooing" motif. Jesus' declaration that the woman (Samaria) has had five husbands and currently has no husband fits prophetic use of marriage infidelity language for denunciations of false

worship (Hosea 2:2). The woman's evangelism of the town following her conversation with Jesus fits the pattern of the word of one person bringing another to Jesus who then comes to believe in him because of Jesus' own word (John 1:35-39, 41-42, 44-51). Schneiders uses a historically reconstructed narrative of tensions in the Christian community between Samaritans and Jews as the situation she sees the episode to be addressing. She (1995:366) makes a point to say that her interpretation "allows the woman to function symbolically and theologically rather than merely sexually in the episode." It "seems to make better sense of the pericope than the hypothesis of a long digression on the woman's morals for the sole purpose of displaying Jesus' preternatural knowledge."

Bruce Bradshaw (2002) pursues the aim of interpreting the story from the perspective of the narrative of Christian redemption. He pursues this aim with interests in community development that transforms oppressive cultural narratives and the social structures they support so that they bear the values of the narrative of Christian redemption. Bradshaw (2002:153-156) perceives the episode to be a redemptive historical event where Jesus challenges the cultural narrative of the Samaritan woman's community and empowers its transformation. In Bradshaw's perception of this narrative, women in that historical setting depended on marriage for economic support. The foundation of a woman's worth lay in her ability to bear a child. A man could and often would divorce a woman who could not bear children. The woman Jesus met at the well had repeatedly married because of her dependence upon men for economic support. Due to infertility she had been repeatedly divorced and was forced to finally live with a man without the dignity of marriage. She was an embarrassment to her family and community

and was so ostracized that she came to the well at noon, several hours after the other women came to draw water and socialize. Jesus' interactions with her at the well empowered her to receive a new identity through the narrative of Christian redemption that restored her dignity and worth. When Jesus asked her about her husband and told her that she had had five husbands and was currently living with one who was not her husband, he was exposing the social injustice of the community rather than her immorality. It was a way of affirming her and confronting the injustice of her situation. The woman was transformed through her encounter with Jesus and received a new identity. She was empowered to return to her community and convince them and herself of her new identity in the narrative of Christian redemption. She challenged the community that she was worthy of inclusion within it, thereby initiating transformation in the community narrative.

Bradshaw employs at least three contexts to help shape his perception of the episode. He uses historical materials that indicate the role of women and the importance of child-bearing in first century Palestine. He enlists a cultural narrative pattern existing in many contemporary peasant villages to help construct the cultural narrative he thinks existed in the Samaritan village. He also draws upon his understanding of the narrative of Christian redemption to guide his perception of the sequence of the episode.

The awareness of the power of aims and interests to influence perception of meaning in such different directions as the above illustrates has raised several issues in discussions of biblical hermeneutics. First is the issue of power. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (1995:308) remarks that "there is no innocent reading; rather, all reading is interested,

and to the extent that these are vested interests, all reading is ideological."[5] Miguel A. De La Torre (2002:4) observes that,

> when the Bible is read from the social location of those whom society privileges, the risk exists that interpretations designed to protect their power and privilege are subconsciously or consciously constructed. Those who are the authority of society impose their views upon the text and confuse what they declare the Bible to say with what the text actually states.

The possibility of vested interests shaping perception of meaning that is self-serving indicates the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion that unmasks idols we may be (perhaps unconsciously) serving. Thiselton (1992:348) states that "Ricouer views the work of the 'three masters of suspicion', Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, in positive terms as 'clearing the horizon' for a more authentic word." Comparative critical method that exposes idols and wish-fulfillments prepares the way for a transforming post-critical hearing of the biblical text (Thiselton 1992:372). Each of the interpretations above not only perceives different meanings in Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman; they also perceive the interaction in ways that advance the position of their own interests.[6] Consciousness of the possible distorting influence of our own self-interests can create possibilities for us to listen to the text afresh.

A second issue concerns the importance of keeping our perception of meaning as provisional and open to challenge. Joel B. Green (1995c:417-418) argues that every effort to locate an intelligible interpretation of a biblical text will privilege some aspects of the text over others. In the interpretations of John 4 above, Bradshaw privileges the peasant village context of the text whereas Morris and Schneiders give little thought to it. Morris privileges the evangelistic purpose recorded in John 20:30-31, whereas Schneiders and Bradshaw give little attention to it. Schneiders privileges the address to Samaritan

theology and the implausibility of people being willing to keep marrying a woman who has gone through successive divorces, data ignored by Bradshaw and given less weight by Morris. Green (1995c:418) states that "if we are to have readerly interests (and we do) *and* remain open to being challenged by the very texts to which we bring our interests, we will need continually to adopt a position of humility in our interpretive enterprise." Others may bring to our attention aspects of the text that we have not adequately noticed before, shifting the weight we give to the various elements in our perception of the whole. Openness involves a willingness to hear the biblical text again, not restricting the text to speaking only our own values and desires.

A third issue concerns whether the aims and interests that we bring to our reading of a biblical text are appropriate to that text. Richard Paul Hordern (1983:75) states that the questions we bring to a biblical text must have some correspondence with the subject matter of the text.[7] Green (1995c:419) asserts that "readers are not the only ones who have interests; NT texts have them also." Gordon D. Fee (2000:11) argues that these interests must be understood as including the interests of the Spirit of God.[8] Disregarding the interests of biblical texts results in silencing them as a voice that speaks to us as an other. Thiselton (1992:29) states that "transforming biblical reading de-centres individual or corporate self-interests, and allows readers to share the new horizons projected by what 'addresses' them from beyond them as 'other' "

Many of the various historical and literary strategies of interpretation that are advocated in modern biblical hermeneutics are concerned in part with discerning the biblical text's communicative intent and interests by exploring historical, literary, social, and canonical contexts. Thiselton (1992:291-307) helpfully draws attention to how intent

and interests may include not only the conveying of information, but also a transforming effect. Drawing on the speech act theory of John R. Searle, he observes that some biblical texts may intend to express what is, others may intend to shape what will be, and still others may intend to shape what will be by stating what is. Green (2002a:9) argues that our interests must be willing to at least temporarily become tuned with the interests of the biblical text if we are to effectively engage with it.[9] It is appropriate to ask all three of the above interpreters of John 4 if they are engaging with not only various contextual indicators of what information the episode is conveying, but also with the contextual indicators of the response the episode seeks to elicit.

Distance between Horizons

The horizons of biblical texts are culturally, linguistically, and temporally distant from the horizons of contemporary readers.[10] They may also be theologically distant. The historical and cultural particularity of many biblical texts raises challenges of intelligibility and relevance. Biblical texts can at times appear to be concerned with things far removed from our own lives, and as having little to do with some of our contemporary issues. Some inter-related issues that the distance between horizons raises are (1) the need for contemporary readers to fill in gaps and indeterminacies that are presented by biblical texts; (2) the need for finding adequate frameworks for engaging with the texts; and (3) the role of dialog and the activity of God's Spirit for extending and transforming our horizons.

In the interpretations of John 4 presented by Morris, Schneiders, and Bradshaw, each interpreter brought into play various material to fill in gaps that were not explicitly stated in the biblical text. For example, Morris (1971:264) perceives the Samaritan

woman as utilizing provisions for divorce that he cites from rabbinic law, though the text saying she had five husbands says nothing about who divorced whom. Bradshaw (2002:156) perceives the woman as being divorced by five husbands because of infertility, but this is not stated in the text. Schneiders (1995:361) thinks the five husbands refer to Samaria's acceptance of the false gods of five foreign tribes after the return of the remnants of Israel from Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:13-34), though again there is no explicit mention of this historical context in the text. All three interpreters see it to be important to supply material that gives an account for the woman's marriage situation. They all look to socio-historical, linguistic, and literary data to stimulate, constrain, and validate what they do to fill in what is not explicitly stated in the text. However what they do to fill in the text is also indebted to their employment of contemporary experience. Morris appears to call on his experience with personal evangelism encounters and/or narratives of such encounters, Schneiders utilizes her experience with and observation of sexist relations, and Bradshaw draws on his experience with and knowledge of contemporary cultural narratives concerned with infertility.

The variant ways that Morris, Schneiders, and Bradshaw pulled together socio-historical, linguistic, and literary data with their contemporary experience to fill in what they recognize as unexpressed gaps in the text raises questions about what constitutes valid meaning that is authentic to the text and to contemporary experience. Should our engagement with a biblical text only be concerned with determining the content the text expresses within its own horizon? Is there more than one meaning that is valid for us to actualize in our interpretations? Is there meaning beyond the horizons of the text that the

text calls us to perceive and enact through our engagement with it? Is John 4 only concerned to inform us about an episode, or is it also concerned to elicit a response?

Citing the work of Umberto Eco, Green (2002a:8) argues that biblical texts, by the very need for us to fill in gaps, invite us to render them meaningful through text-guided performance.[11] This suggests that biblical texts offer what Vanhoozer (1995:318) calls instructions, flags, and signals that can guide and govern our perception of the interests of the texts and what they intend to stimulate and constrain in our perception of meaning and response. Though the need to fill in gaps may be due to assumptions that the text expected us to bring to our reading of it, it is also possible that some gaps were left as a means to draw us into them. They may intend for us to utilize co-text, prior texts, relevant contemporary situations and experience to assist in the perception of meaning. The gaps may be an invitation to interweave our world with the world of the text and to respond in our world to the call of the text.[12] John 4 may call us to be personally evangelized by Jesus and become his disciples in our world. It may call us to be alerted to and accept the full discipleship Jesus gives to the marginalized in our community. It may call us to recognize and enter into Jesus' transformation of our communities so that people bear the identity and are characterized by the values given to them by the kingdom of God.

Though biblical texts may invite us to render them meaningful through text-guided performance, the socio-historical, linguistic, literary, and sometimes theological distance of the biblical texts from our worlds raises the issue of what helps us to pick up the author's cues and validates our reading of the cues. What helps us find and choose adequate frameworks for engaging with the biblical texts. Referencing the spectrum of

interpretive strategies surveyed through the essays in the book *Hearing the New Testament*, Green (1995c:420-424) suggests that four basic questions can direct our attention to the cues provided by the author. The question, "What is the text?" directs us to notice the genre, narrative and rhetorical conventions, and textual markers of thought unit and development. The question, "How is this text co-textually situated?" invites consideration of the way that the text builds on earlier co-text, the meaning of words and grammar as they are used in this text and co-text, and the words or concepts that are in focus in the text. The question, "What is the socio-historical context of this text?" encourages us to examine the social world within which the text is situated, the influence of church traditions on the text, and the social location within which we are interacting with the text. The fourth question, "On what texts does this text build?" alerts us to be sensitive to the way the text draws on other texts and situates itself in the ongoing narrative of God's redemption.

Green's questions largely focus on the help provided by comparative analysis. The three interpretations of John 4 and the review of missiological discussion in chapter 2 suggest that various kinds of experience can also aid in finding adequate frameworks for picking up the direction that cues in the text give to our perception and reception of meaning. Mesters (1992:44) states that when people read the Bible together in community and in relation to their life situations they perceive that people in the Bible faced problems similar to those faced by the present community. Speaking autobiographically, Mesters (1995:6) recounts that when he began to study the Bible this way, he discovered that while the world of the Bible and the world of contemporary life are truly different, "the lives of the people in them have the same roots and prompt the

same questions." This suggests a largely intuitive rather than analytical perception of the cues of the text, based on commonalities in human experience.[13] John Howard Yoder (1985:113) suggests that the Spirit of God may also have something to do with this perception. He states that "in the juxtaposition of those [biblical] stories with our stories there leaps the spark of the Spirit, illuminating parallels and contrasts, to give us the grace to see our age in God's light and God's truth in our words." Thiselton (1992:531) observes that such personal narratives of life experiences can provide an interpretive frame that "may enhance pre-understanding and weave meaning and textual force with emotional warmth and practices in life." He also warns that they need to be subject to corporate evaluation and testing in regard to whether the horizon of the biblical text has been collapsed into the reader's personal narrative.

Liberation theology asserts that *praxis* is a further significant framework for picking up the cues of the biblical text. Philip Gibbs (1996:297) notes the link that Gutiérrez makes between the faith commitment of *praxis* and the capacity to hear God's word. This is related to what has earlier been said about the need for our interests to become tuned with the interests of the biblical text if we are to effectively engage with it. Dyrness (1985:171-172) states that "much in Scripture cannot be understood apart from the active obedience to the voice that speaks there. This experience will then, in turn, provide a further context in which Scripture is read anew." Active obedience, such as commitment to the liberation of the oppressed sensitizes our awareness of the cues in the biblical text that indicate the text's concern with that liberation.

One last issue that is raised by the distance between the horizons of biblical texts and our own horizons regards the importance of dialog and the activity of God's Spirit

for extending and transforming our horizons via the biblical text. Many of the writers surveyed in chapter 2 advocated the importance of some kind of conversation between the biblical text and interpreters. Interpreters not only question the text but are also questioned by it. Thiselton (1992:537) observes that initially we interpret a biblical text in terms of what is familiar in our own horizons. However as we continue to interact with the text it can enlarge our horizon and potentially transform it. Thiselton (1992:398) notes how Gadamer stresses the way that hermeneutical dialog can include and transcend our interests. Through dialog we become aware of content that we did not know or assume before and which challenges us to see things from the perspective of another. Our distance from the horizons of the biblical texts challenges us to recognize the possibility that our initial interpretation needs correction from an effort at sustained dialogical engagement with the text. This dialogical engagement can be stimulated and constrained as we pursue the four basic questions posed by Green, juxtapose this or that life experience with the text, and utilize the perspective of our *praxis* to try out possible interpretations of the text. What we perceive through the process can stimulate or constrain us to bring new or different content into view and adjust our perception of meaning. Other people's perceptions, such as those presented by Morris, Schneiders, and Bradshaw on John 4 can challenge us to further dialog with the text. Thiselton (1992:6) states, "In actualizations of understanding or encounter between readers and texts, the boundaries of horizons may be extended and moved, and thus come to constitute *new* horizons."

The Spirit of God also can enable us to perceive meaning outside the purview of our horizons. Dyrness (1985:166) observes how engagement with biblical texts can make us aware of how in these texts

> we encounter something completely outside our experience that forces us to say with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?"... By reflection on this God and his interaction with his people, I am led to see myself not only as misinformed about this or that fact about the past but also as a sinner, someone standing guilty before a holy God. I come to see that my need is not more information, as I might have thought, but conversion, which I could never have guessed.

The perception of the meaning of biblical texts is not just a human endeavor. The Spirit of God grants people existential engagements with God as they read the texts. The Spirit of God can transform an episode such as Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman into an episode of interaction with us, calling us to faith and transformation. Thiselton (1992:6) affirms that such transformations are in the Christian tradition "the heart of the message of the cross and resurrection."

Modes of Engagement

In various places the discussion above has touched upon what might be called modes of engaging a biblical text, such as reading in relation to a text's communicative intent, openness to new understanding and perspective, comparative analysis, reading the text in relation to our *praxis* and experience, using intuition, dialoging with the text, and reading with openness to insight from the Spirit of God. There are two other issues relating to modes of engagement that have bearing on the perception and reception of meaning that shapes our religious worlds. The first is concerned with engaging the text as addressees rather than as neutral observers. The second focuses on reading in cooperation with the language modes utilized by the text.

As has been noted in chapter one, many historical interpretive strategies seek to take up a position of detached neutrality in order to objectively investigate what a text meant in its original historical and literary context. Green (2000:33-34) observes that such strategies are primarily concerned with the task of description.[14] However, as the discussion under aims and interests has indicated, descriptions of what the text meant are not neutral, but reflect aims and interests. Such descriptions often do not readily translate into what the text means for us today, and our efforts to keep a detached neutrality during exegesis can run counter to engaging a text in ways that lead to our lives being shaped by it.[15] One could arrive at the interpretations of John 4 proposed by Morris, Schneiders, and Bradshaw as perceptions of what the text meant without ever engaging their descriptions of this episode as speaking to our contemporary lives. The text can remain remote from us rather than being a vehicle for hearing a word from God.

In contrast to this way of engaging biblical texts, Stephen E. Fowl (1995:398) argues for a theological reading of Scripture. He defines this as "one designed to shape and be shaped by the faith, worship, and practices of Christian communities." He (1995:399) sees the primary location for theological reading to be "within the context of those Christian communities that seek to order their common life in accord with their interpretation of Scripture."[16] Theological reading of Scripture involves perception and reception of meaning that issues from identifying biblical texts as part of an authoritative canon that has the capacity to address all generations of Christians including our own. It calls for an embrace of Christian reading traditions as a means for guiding our engagement with biblical texts. It lifts up the communal dimension of reading and the

means it provides for correcting and empowering our perception and reception of meaning.

Jim McClendon (1986:31) offers as a hermeneutical motto the statement, "the present Christian community is the primitive community and the eschatological community." Green (2000:42) interprets this to mean that biblical texts address all Christian communities with the challenge to believe the story of God the Bible expresses so that the story shapes how they read their lives in relation to God and all that God has created. In support of this, Green (2000:29-30) observes the sociological phenomena that some cultural products, such as biblical texts, have the capacity to both speak to and beyond the situations within which they were formed.[17] Goldingay (1995:127-132) argues that the process of canon formation shaped and ordered the biblical writings into forms that facilitated that capacity so that they could authoritatively address communities who had not taken part in the original revelatory events.[18] For example, the scarcity of concrete historical references in a prophetic writing like Isaiah, invite readers to hear its words in relation to later contexts.[19] Narrative materials in both the Old and New Testaments often limit the amount of historical particulars they recount, suggesting that the canonical shape of those materials sought to enhance their capacity to speak beyond a particular historical reference.[20] The letters of Paul address particular contexts in the light of the gospel, but they do so in a way that makes normative theological statements speak to those contexts and beyond those contexts.[21] Wall (1995:378-379) holds that bringing diverse occasional materials into a canon invites analogical reflection on the subject matter of the text, a seeking for an analogue that renders the text meaningful for contemporary life.

Theological reading of Scripture involves more than just adopting an attitude that the texts are part of an authoritative canon that has the capacity to address us. Trevor Hart (2000:188-189) observes how the controversy between Arian and Nicene theologians involved a dispute over what constitutes proper rules of reading that guide the way we engage biblical texts as an authoritative canon that shapes our lives. Different rules for engaging biblical texts as addressees of those texts will result in different perceptions and receptions of meaning. Hart (2000:192) affirms that "we read deliberately within an identifiable tradition of reading, and in accordance, therefore, with rules or guidelines which that tradition has laid down or lays down."[22] Such rules were worked out "in the light of prior engagements with that text, representing, as it were, the accumulated wisdom of generations of reading of this text as Scripture."[23]

The first rule Hart (2000:193-196) identifies is to approach a biblical text as people who presume the presence of a communicative intent that is mediated by the text. The discussion above under aims and interests has already noted that listening for the communicative intent and interests of texts and being open to texts expanding our own horizons affect what we perceive and receive. A second rule is to attend to Scripture as a whole when we engage with biblical texts (Hart 2000:196-201). Hart (2000:199) sees this to involve our recognizing that all biblical texts refer us to "the reality and structure of God's dealings with humankind and the world." As we listen to the distinct voices of particular texts, we attend to the relation of those voices to the story of God that the whole canon collectively unfolds.[24] For example, the meaning we perceive in Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4 is permitted to be affected by and is brought into conversation with the chorus of voices that witness to God's character and

purpose in various parts of the canon. [25] How does the expression of Jesus in this story relate to the God who created people in the image of God, who promised blessings of world wide implications to the patriarchs, who redeemed slaves to be his people, who provided instructions for holy living and means of atonement for those who sin, who rebuked social injustice, who sent Jesus to die for the sins of the world, who raised Jesus from the dead, who sent the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower the church, and who will one day make all things new?

A third rule Hart (2000:201-204) identifies is to read biblical texts "in the Spirit." This rule involves reading the text as people who through faith in Christ dwell in God's presence and who are indwelt by the Spirit of God. It includes recognition and expectation that engaging a biblical text can be an event in which God addresses us. It provides a perception and reception of meaning that arises from our encountering in the text a God with whom we are in fellowship. Hart (2000:203) states, "We understand the text in profound ways otherwise hidden from us because we now understand this God, whose story it is and of whom the text speaks." For example, our hearing of Jesus' encounter with the woman at Samaria brings into play our own encounters with Jesus and our ensuing life that has been and is continually being transformed by the Spirit of God. Such a reading in the Spirit may affirm, renew, or modify the scope of what we experience such encounters to mean and call for in our life with God.

Theological reading as addressees of an authoritative canon lifts up the communal dimension of reading and the means it provides for empowering and correcting our perception and reception of meaning. Fowl (1995:403-408) affirms that theological reading must give attention to the practices of the ecclesial faith community that lead to

or result from a reading of Scripture. Loughlin (1996:50-51) states that the church learns the ruled reading of Scripture through their catechesis, liturgy, and creeds. Such practices form people's understanding of the overall story of God.[26] For example, Loughlin (1996:223) argues that through participation in the Eucharist people absorb and become absorbed in the story the ritual enacts. They become actual characters within the story, asking and receiving forgiveness, giving praise, and sharing in that night's meal. Such practices provide a theological location for perceiving biblical texts in relation to the story of God and for experiencing what they present.[27]

The communal dimension of theological reading includes the directions and warnings that interpretations of biblical texts by other Christian communities, both past and present, can provide for our present perception and reception of meaning. Fowl (1995:401-403) states that contemporary Christian communities are part of an ongoing tradition of people who have sought to live faithfully in relation to God. The readings and practices of other Christian communities provide a witness to the ways particular readings of biblical texts have encouraged or hindered faithful living. Fowl (1995:407) states that often it is the voice of other Christians that alert us to the need for correction in our reading and practice. For example, Schneiders' and Bradshaw's voices can make us aware that there may be an anthropocentric bias in interpretations that see Jesus to be exposing the sexual immorality of the Samaritan woman, and that such interpretation encourages sexual domination of women in the Christian community. Fowl (1995:402) suggests that John Chrysostom's sermons on wealth and poverty might help contemporary Christians living in a consumer culture to hear and receive insight regarding how to respond to the address of James 5:1-5 to the rich.

A related issue to engaging biblical texts as addressees of those texts is to engage the texts in cooperation with the communication modes they employ. C. Clifton Black (1995:260) observes that rhetorical critics such as James Muilenburg and Amos Niven Wilder have argued that the various literary genres employed by biblical writers are essential to the communication of their content.[28] James L. Bailey (1995:201) states that a genre such as "a parabolic story of Jesus cannot be transformed into an explanation of what the story means without a severe loss."[29] Loretta Dornisch (1975:14-19) notes how Paul Ricouer, while affirming the value of critical analyses of biblical texts, argues for the necessity of a post-critical entering into the symbolic experience they disclose. This suggests that the communication mode or modes employed by a biblical text are an essential vehicle by which the text pursues its communicative intent and interests. It also suggests that whether or not we engage a text in cooperation with its communication mode will affect the meaning we perceive and receive.

Much of genre analysis has focused on delineating the patterned characteristics of various literary forms, the ways of visualizing reality that they provide, the social contexts where they are normally employed, and the rhetorical impact that they facilitate (Bailey 1995:200-211). Though such an analysis can stimulate and constrain our perception of the cues provided by the text for finding appropriate frameworks to bring to our engagement with the text, there still remains our actual engagement with the text in cooperation with the language mode that the genre utilizes. John Goldingay (1995:1-7) classifies these modes into four main types: (1) narrative, (2) instructions, (3) prophecy, and (4) experiential and revelatory material.[30] He argues that each of these modes invites forms of engagement and response that are suited to their nature.[31]

Goldingay (1995:76-77) states that narrative presents readers with scenes and a plot and invites readers to enter into the story. It encourages people to imaginatively identify with the life and circumstances portrayed, and with the characters that are introduced.[32] Thiselton (1992:355-357) notes Ricoeur's argument that the narrative can become the narrative-world of the reader and when the reader "is seized" by this narrative-world the effects can become revelatory and transforming.[33] The directedness of the plot pulls readers forward towards the conclusion, offering encounters and possibilities that can enlarge the horizons of readers.[34] For example, the narrative of Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4 can draw us into a narrative world where we may experience Jesus interacting with us, hearing the possibility for us to worship in spirit and in truth, experiencing his inclusion and affirmation of the marginalized, or encountering his call to community transformation.[35]

Instructions invite us to bring our identity and lifestyle under their scrutiny, engaging their challenge for us to be and to act otherwise than we are inclined apart from such instruction (Goldingay 1995:125). Goldingay (1995:5) states that the instruction mode of scripture invites a response of delight and submission. Drawing on the work of John Searle, Thiselton (1992:294-296) observes how the concern of instructions, such as commands, is to get the world to match the words. For example, when Paul says "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32), his words exert a force that seeks to elicit his readers to conform their lives to this instruction. Commands such as this also provide an explicit example of how instructions are set within a narrative framework of God's relation to his people (Goldingay 1995:89-90, Stiver 2001:121-122).[36] Engaging them as instructions within

this framework makes responses to instructions to be responses to God. The narrative framework also shapes how we construe what it means to match our lives and our world to a particular instruction.[37] How God has dealt with our sins in Christ provides an example of what it means to embody being "kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."

Goldingay (1995:91-96) observes that perceiving what kind of submission a scriptural command calls for from us is not always straightforward. Some instructions, such as the commands to love God and neighbor, have general applicability in many diverse contexts. Others, such as the command in Deuteronomy 22:8 to build a parapet around the roof of a new house, address a specific situation whose relevance to contemporary life may not be immediately apparent. Hays (1996:6,298) argues for analogical appropriation of such instructions, permitting the narrative framework within which they are set to stimulate the analogies.[38] Goldingay (1995:96-100) notes how Jesus' treatment of Old Testament instructions in Matthew 5:21-48 suggests that we make distinctions between instructions that condescend to dealing with problems of human sinfulness (such as writing a certificate of divorce) and those that direct God's people to conformity to God's ultimate purpose (such as do not commit adultery), with the latter taking priority over the former. Goldingay (1995:118-119) further notes how biblical instructions whose language assumes sexism, slaveholding, and racism often express a vision that opposes what they assume. Thompson (1996) argues for the need to observe the trajectory of canonical dialogue in order to perceive such visions, and to evaluate the way to perceive and respond to a particular instruction in the light of the purpose of God expressed by such visions.

In the prophetic communication mode, we encounter words and visions that are identified as being given to a specific prophet from God and are directed to particular needs and situations, calling people to repentance and hope (Goldingay 1995:5, 141). Engaging prophetic discourse in cooperation with its language mode is to perceive and receive it as a word of God calling us to repentance and hope. Goldingay (1995:141) states that while the words address particular contexts, the significance of the words transcends those contexts. The kind of historical circumstances, beliefs, lives or needs that a prophetic writing indicates God is addressing, call us to hear the promise or warning of the address to us in relation to those particularities. Through the particularity of the address we perceive the purpose and the priorities of God that are or will be at work in our own situation. For example, in Jeremiah 18 God tells Judah that when he warns a nation of coming judgment for their sins, he will relent of inflicting that judgment if they reform their evil ways. If he announces that he will give prosperity to a nation and they do evil, he will reconsider doing what he has announced. This declaration calls Judah and all people who read the prophecy to count on God to respond to who they are and what they do in this kind of way, and to respond to God by repentance and hope (Goldingay 1995:173, 189-194).

Experiential and revelatory material is a language mode that expresses personal experience, presupposes or looks for a revelation from God, and presupposes reflection on the relationship of the experience to prior revelation and experience (Goldingay 1995:203). Such material invites us to enter into the experience, and to respond to God with awe and/or further theological reflection on the relationship of our experience to the experience related by the biblical text and the revelation of God (Goldingay 1995:5, 203,

255-256, 263-264). For example, Psalm 4 invites us to make its cry out to God and its confidence in the joy that comes from relationship with God our own. It can challenge us to reflect on whether we have an experience that can make the words of the psalm our own and what we would mean if we joined the psalmist in speaking the words to God. Revelation 5 invites us to join in experiencing the vision of the Lamb, who takes the scroll as the only one worthy of opening it and its seven seals, responding in awe and worship. It can challenge us to reflect on the meaning of this vision, both in relation to the overall purpose of God expressed by the biblical canon, and for our faith and hope in our own day. The book of Job invites us to experience with Job his anguish and his questions about the ways of God with him, and to experience the new perspective that the closing vision of God provides him. It can challenge us to reflect on the meaning of our relationship with God when we are in the midst of suffering. Goldingay (1995:256) states that engaging with such texts in cooperation with their invitation to enter into the experience they express facilitates our discovery of whether or not we have the kind of experience that can be expressed by means of the text. The text's offering of itself as a vehicle for engaging with God can even evoke within us the response to God it expresses.

Conclusion

The above has shown the complex array of issues that biblical hermeneutical discussion has brought forward regarding where meaning resides, what influences the meaning people perceive, and how people receive that meaning as a transforming influence in their religious worlds. The above discussion has clustered these issues around three concerns: (1) the aims and interests people pursue, both consciously and unconsciously, when they study the Bible; (2) the distance between the horizons of

biblical texts from the horizons of contemporary readers; and (3) the modes through which people engage biblical texts.

The concern for aims and interests draws attention to the possibility of vested interests shaping perception and reception of meaning that is self-serving and the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion that unmasks idols we may be (perhaps unconsciously) serving. It also asserts the importance of keeping our perception of meaning as provisional and open to challenge, since every interpretation of a biblical text privileges some aspects of the text over others. It further affirms the need to listen for the communicative intent and interests of biblical texts so that we may hear their address to us as an "other" and thereby have our horizons expanded.

The concern for the cultural, linguistic, temporal, and theological distance between the horizons of biblical texts and the horizons of contemporary readers has brought attention to the need of contemporary readers to fill in gaps and indeterminacies that are presented by biblical texts. The need to do this raises the further issue of what textual, extra-textual, and experiential cues help us find and choose adequate frameworks for engaging with the biblical texts. Attention has also been given to the role of dialoging with biblical texts and the activity of God's Spirit as a means for extending and transforming our horizons in ways that help them more adequately fuse with the horizons of the texts.

The concern for modes of engagement with biblical texts notices the effect on perception and reception of meaning that arises from a theological reading of biblical texts as addressees rather than as neutral observers. Various scholars have discussed the ways that the canonical shape of biblical writings facilitates their capacity to

authoritatively address all Christian communities. The inclusion of the writings in a Christian canon implies reading them in accord with communal traditions and communal ways for empowering and correcting perception and reception of meaning. The concern for modes of engagement also draws attention to the language modes employed by biblical texts and the effect that cooperation with those language modes can have on what we experience when we engage the texts and how we respond to that engagement.

The above issues need to be addressed by a Bible study strategy that seeks for the gospel to shape religious worlds. Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction each have ways of addressing these issues that can contribute to the shape of a Bible study strategy. The next section will look at the way Dodd's model addresses the issues and the theoretical and empirical warrants for that address.

Intercultural Communication and Meaning

The cultural, linguistic, temporal, and sometimes theological distance between the horizons of biblical texts and the horizons of contemporary readers suggests that engaging with biblical texts is a form of intercultural communication. Carley H. Dodd provides a model of intercultural communication that focuses attention on the social environment and the interactions between people shaped by different cultures that facilitate effective communication outcomes. Though Dodd does not relate his model to a process of interacting with biblical texts, the salient features of his model and the relationship those features have to each other address many of the issues raised in the previous section. The following will briefly present Dodd's model by reviewing the assumptions that provide a context for it and by describing the process of the model with

references to theories and research that support its salient features. It will then show the ways that the model addresses the issues clustered around people's aims and interests, the distance between horizons, and the modes of engagement discussed above. Theoretical and empirical warrants that intercultural communication research provides for the model and its address to the issues will be interwoven throughout.

Perceived Cultural Difference Model of Intercultural Communication (Figure 1)

Carley H. Dodd draws upon research in uncertainty reduction theory, third culture building, intercultural accommodation and adjustment, and intercultural competency and effectiveness to construct his model of intercultural communication. He sets the model in the context of six fundamental assumptions that are widely present in these various research traditions. First, the communication accommodation identified as intercultural communication only occurs when people perceive cultural difference to exist between themselves and those with whom they are interacting (Dodd 1998:4-6,9,20-21). Cultural difference implies that people may not initially share various norms, thought patterns, structures, and systems in common because they have been socialized in contrasting group backgrounds. The perception of cultural difference is what initiates the process that Dodd's model depicts. Dodd's position here is similar to Ellingsworth (1983:196-197), who states that the perception of another as culturally different is central to the identification of intercultural interaction.[39] Ellingsworth (1983:203) goes on to say, "Mutual adaptation of communication style is proposed as the necessary condition for intercultural communication to occur and continue."

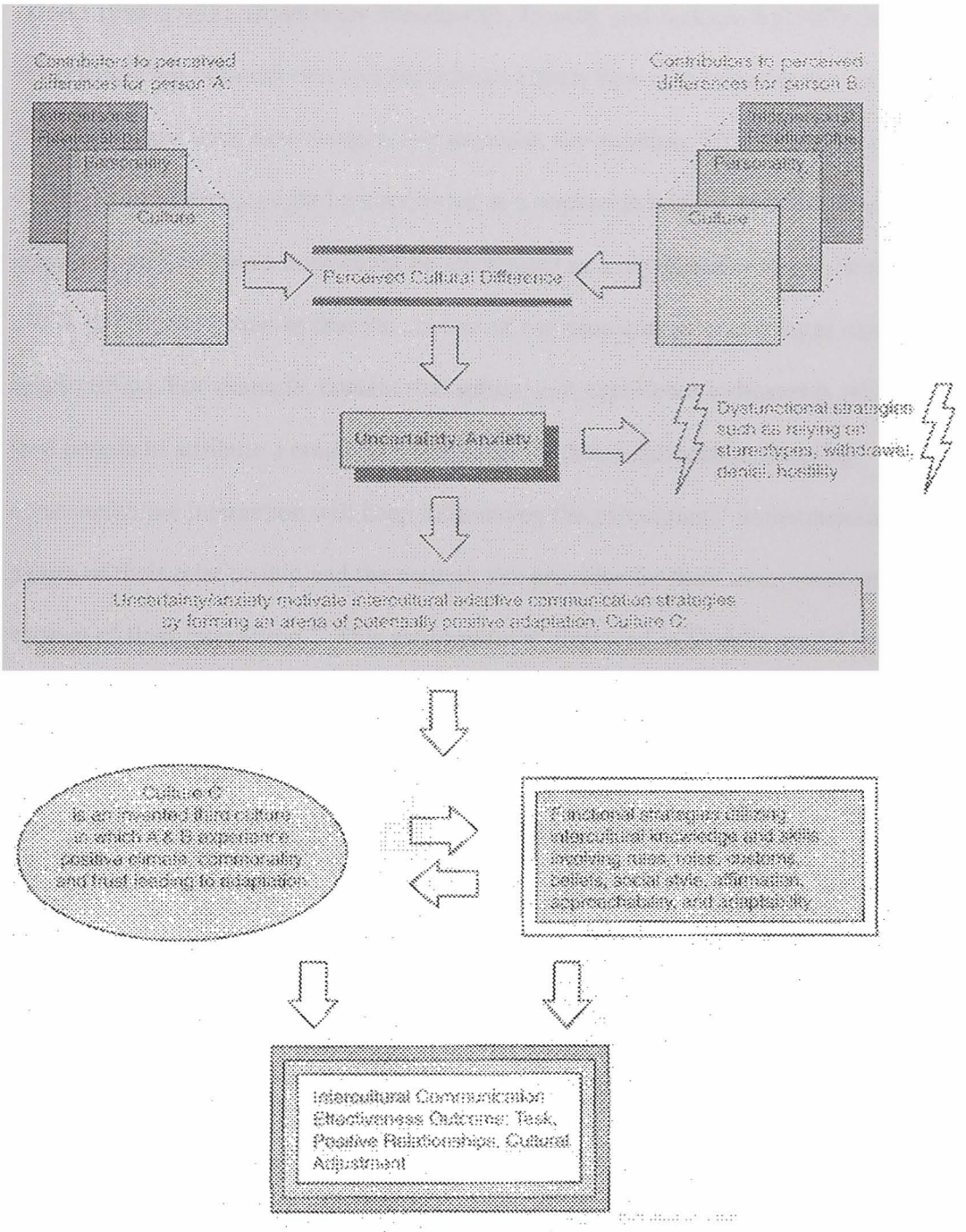

Figure 1: Perceived Cultural Difference Model of Intercultural Communication (Dodd 1998:7)

Second, intercultural communication has content and relationship dimensions (Dodd 1998:21-22). Dodd notes Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson's (1967) emphasis that the relationship between two communicators affects how they interpret the content of their communicative interchanges. For example, the question "Could we get started?" coming from a friend might be interpreted as a *request* to begin a task whereas the same question coming from a boss might be interpreted as a *command* to begin. Dodd (1998:22) further observes that the content of communicative interchanges can alter relationships. For example, content that subsequent experience indicates is reliable can lead people to attribute a credibility dimension to their relationship. Ongoing communicative interaction will keep influencing the participants' understanding of the nature of their relationship and the context this provides for their interpretation of the content of their interaction.[40] This assumption is displayed in Dodd's model by the attention given to relationship throughout the process that the model depicts.

Third, the first impressions people have of the characteristics of another person are influenced by the person's communication style (Dodd 1998:22). This assumption takes up Ehrenhaus' (1983:261) position that "when two persons converse, both...attribute meaning to the messages that constitute the interaction and to the other as inferred through the messages."[41] It refines Ehrenhaus' position by affirming people infer personality qualities from the *messages* and the *manner* of the person communicating with them. For example, a person might infer that a person who says words of greeting with a smile and attentiveness is friendly. People who differ in cultural, family, and individual patterns of experience and socialized expectations may infer different personality qualities from the same communication style. For example, an assertive

communication style might lead some to surmise that the person is friendly and self-confident and others to conclude that the person is ill mannered and arrogant.[42] Dodd's assumption affirms that inferences from communication style are particularly influential during initial interactions. This assumption provides a context for the attention Dodd's model gives to using strategies to manage communication style and the perception of communication style.[43]

Fourth, intercultural communication involves uncertainty reduction (Dodd 1998:23). Dodd works with this assumption from the perspective of uncertainty reduction theory and its modification and application to intercultural conditions by Gudykunst and his various associates.[44] Gudykunst and Hammer (1988:106) define *uncertainty* as referring to "the ability to predict accurately how others will behave and the ability to explain the behavior of others." *Uncertainty reduction* refers to the efforts of people to make "proactive predictions and retroactive explanations about the behavior of others." The affective counterpart to uncertainty is anxiety, the insecurity or fear of negative consequences a person feels when there is too much guesswork about what to expect from a relationship and the meaning of messages (Dodd 1998:9,23; Gudykunst and Hammer 1988:108,112; Gudykunst 1995a:9). In relation to uncertainty reduction, intercultural communication can be understood as communicative behavior that is motivated by a drive to increase predictability and reduce anxiety to manageable or desirable thresholds. Dodd's model directs the uncertainty and anxiety reduction drives underlying intercultural communication toward forming a communication climate where adaptation to the other's communicative behavior can occur in mutually beneficial ways.

Fifth, cultures inherently contain communication systems (Dodd 1998:25-26). Dodd cites Smith (1966) and Hecht, Anderson, and Ribeau (1989) as support for this assumption.[45] Various symbols, rituals, customs, and formats are present in cultures and interrelate as a communication system. People use their understanding of the cultural communication system to interpret the meaning of people's use, misuse, or non-use of symbols in particular contexts. Cultural misunderstanding occurs when people use or interpret other people's use of symbols in accord with their own culture's communication system, but at variance with the cultural communication system used by those with whom they are interacting. Dodd's model is concerned with depicting a process wherein people can learn and better match their use and interpretation of symbols and communication styles to the cultural communication system others are employing.

Sixth, the goal of intercultural communication is communication effectiveness (Dodd 1998:26). Dodd understands effectiveness as reaching desired outcomes such as successful task completion, positive interpersonal relationships, and cultural adjustment.[46] These outcomes are similar to the findings of Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman's (1978) study of what American students who had sojourned abroad perceived to be dimensions of intercultural effectiveness (i.e., effectively communicating, establishing interpersonal relationships, and coping with psychological stress) and Abe and Wiseman's (1983) replication of that study with Japanese sojourners in America (communicating interpersonally, establishing interpersonal relationships, understanding others, adjusting to different cultures, and adjusting to different societal systems). The scope of Dodd's understanding of effectiveness (task, interpersonal relationships,

adjustment) and the concern of his model to facilitate pursuing the full scope of effectiveness provides a necessary context for utilizing the model.

In the context of these six assumptions, Dodd's model depicts a process that is initiated when two parties (A and B) perceive that they are bringing different assumptions and expectations to their interactions with each other (see Figure 1).[47] The parties may attribute these differences to variant evaluations each are making regarding the nature and value of their interpersonal relationship, variances in the personality and communication style they are bringing to the interaction, and/or variances in socialization from their group/cultural background. Dodd's understanding of this experience is influenced by constructivist theory as it relates to perception (1998:18, 20).[48] According to this theory people make sense of the world through organizing systems of personal constructs or interpretive schemes that provide general rules about social interaction and specific guidelines about behavior in particular situations.[49] The development of these interpretive schemes is an ongoing process that occurs as people communicate with others. The interpretive schemes of those with whom they communicate, both idiosyncratic and those shared by the groups to which they belong, influence the shape of each individual's own interpretive schemes (Nicotera 1995:49-51).[50] In the light of this theory, Dodd's model indicates people have in their minds interpretive schemes for possible interpersonal relationships, personality and communication styles, and cultural patterns that they utilize to make sense of and guide their communicative interaction in the specific situation. As two parties become conscious that they are bringing different interpretive schemes to their interactions with each other and attribute that difference to socialization in different cultural groups, the process of intercultural communication accommodation can begin.

Dodd calls this consciousness "perceived cultural difference" (PCD) and his model affirms that this consciousness is a necessary condition for intercultural communication.

PCD motivates intercultural communication only when parties have interest or need to communicate or foster a relationship with each other (Dodd 1998:63). When such interest or need exists, Dodd's model indicates that through PCD the parties experience uncertainty and/or anxiety about how to relate to each other. The uncertainty and/or anxiety activated by PCD motivate people to engage in a process of social categorization in order to reduce uncertainty.[51] Within this process each party mentally uses their available categories to initially identify the other party with a social/cultural group. They evaluate whether the other party is typical or non-typical of schemata they have available in their interpretive schemes regarding that group. They consider how similar or dissimilar the other party is from themselves and they activate schemata regarding what their own social and personal identity expects they can or should bring to the relationship. They also activate schemata regarding the social role they can be expected to play in the relationship, given the situation and the nature of the other party. As interaction continues people may adjust the social categorization and schemata they employ or may become reinforced in continuing to employ them (Dodd 1998:62-63).[52]

Dodd's model portrays that uncertainty and anxiety can move people to utilize functional or dysfunctional strategies in order to accommodate their communicative behavior to PCD and reduce uncertainty/anxiety. Dysfunctional strategies include relying on stereotypes of the group to whom they have categorized the other party (without being open to perceiving the variances the other party may have from those stereotypes), withdrawing from further interaction, denying that there is cultural difference that calls

for accommodating communication, or hostility towards the other party. Functional strategies include seeking for and using communication rules, customs, phrases, and nonverbal behaviors that better match the other person's culture (with its interpretive schemes) and lead to outcomes associated with intercultural effectiveness. They involve both managing communication style and what interpretive schemes are employed to guide and give meaning to communicative behavior.

Dodd's model directs people to intentionally invent a temporary third culture C as an arena for developing and employing functional strategies of communication accommodation.[53] The third culture is a situational subculture of behavior patterns and communication strategies that participants develop through their interaction with each other.[54] Rather than imposing on the other their own culture's patterns, participants work together to construct a communication environment where they help each other find or create a common ground of mutually beneficial patterns for communicating and building relationships with each other (Casmir 1978:250-252).[55] As they work at coordinating their communicative behavior, from their interactions they develop regulative schemata that guide their interaction with each other and constitutive schemata that guide their interpretation of the meaning of a verbal or non-verbal "speech act" in a particular context. Participants keep adjusting these schemata in response to feedback from other participants (Cronen and Shuter 1983:101; Cronen, Chen, and Pearce 1988:73,75,81,89).[56] Dodd (1998:9-11) holds that the development of a healthy adaptive third culture is a crucial point of the model.[57]

Dodd's model directs people to intentionally shape the interactions that occur in the third culture C in ways that seek the outcomes he associates with intercultural

communication effectiveness (task accomplishment, positive relationships, cultural adjustment). He (1998:11,173) holds that people usually must know, do, or feel certain qualities before these successful outcomes will occur. Knowledge refers to developing awareness of what participants are bringing to the interactions, such as expectations, uncertainties, understandings and misunderstandings of rules and procedures, and cues activating stereotypes and attributions. It also refers to recognizing the need to utilize an appropriate strategy for competently communicating. Feeling refers to developing such affects as trust, comfort, safety, affirmation, or lowered anxiety. Doing refers to developing skills in performing verbal and non-verbal behavior that is appropriate and effective in the situation for achieving desired outcomes, involving rules, roles, customs, beliefs, social style, affirmation, approachability, and adaptability. Communication effectiveness is realized as people develop intercultural competence in what they know, do, and feel.[58]

In summary, Dodd's model is concerned to facilitate people reaching the goal of communication effectiveness by raising consciousness of (1) the causes of perception of cultural difference, (2) the drive that such a perception creates, (3) responses to the drive that will frustrate the attaining of communication effectiveness, (4) the ability of people to create a third culture where they can help each other reach the goal of communication effectiveness, and (5) the ability of people to learn intercultural knowledge and skills that can be utilized in strategies that lead to communication effectiveness. The following will look at the address Dodd's model gives to the hermeneutical issues raised in the prior section.

Address to Hermeneutical Issues

Hermeneutical discussion has drawn attention to the way that people's aims and interests affect what they perceive and receive when they read a biblical text. Our aims and interests can distort our interpretation of a text in ways that protect our power, privilege, or self-interests. They can lead us to notice some aspects of the text and to overlook others. They may not be appropriate to the text and may lead us to disregard the communicative intent and interests of the text so that we effectively silence the text from speaking to us as an "other." Hermeneutical discussion has further drawn attention to the way that the cultural, linguistic, temporal, and theological distance between the horizons of biblical texts and the horizons of contemporary readers creates a need for contemporary readers to fill in gaps and indeterminacies that are presented by biblical texts. Scholars raise issues regarding the role of textual, extra-textual, and experiential cues in helping us find and choose adequate frameworks for doing this. Some draw attention to the need for dialog and the activity of God's Spirit as a means for extending our horizons in ways that help them more adequately fuse with the horizons of the texts. Hermeneutical discussion has also raised the issue of theologically reading the texts as addressees rather than as neutral observers, reading them in accord with communal traditions and ways for empowering and correcting perception and reception of meaning. Some scholars draw attention to the effect that reading in cooperation with the language modes of the texts can have on what people experience when they engage the texts.

Dodd's model addresses issues of aims and interests by directing us to raise our consciousness of cultural difference when interacting with a biblical text.[59] Such consciousness is a necessary condition for people to engage in adaptive communication

behavior that seeks to grasp foreign communication style and assumptions, with their implications for discerning the text's communicative aims and interests.[60] Much of Dodd's textbook on intercultural communication is concerned to facilitate our perception or consciousness of cultural difference by describing the nature of cultural and social diversity and the way it influences people's expression and perception of verbal and nonverbal communication. The main thrust of such description is to create awareness that people express and interpret communicative behavior in relation to interpretive schemes and schemata they develop through socialization in their cultural groups.[61] The same behavior can be diversely interpreted when people employ interpretive schemes and schemata that are significantly at variance with one another. Becoming aware that a biblical text may be shaped by interpretive schemes and schemata different from our own can open us to question whether we understand the text's aims and interests and how they relate to ours. Dodd's model affirms we need some measure of uncertainty and/or anxiety to motivate us to accommodate our way of interacting with a text in order to become more aware of interpretive schemes and schemata that we and it may be utilizing and better attune to the text's communicative intent.[62]

Dodd's strategy of directing the motivation of uncertainty and anxiety towards developing a third culture as a context for interacting with others who are culturally different attends to many hermeneutical issues in significant ways. It directs us to take seriously the relationship dimension of intercultural communication. People who interact with biblical texts, God, and other interpreters in an environment of trust and respect will be more open to look for and receive into their lives meaning and responses elicited by biblical texts that initially were beyond their horizons of understanding.[63] Dodd's model

directs interpreters to develop an environment of relationship building with all those who are participating in the intercultural conversation (God, other interpreters and the biblical text) as the context for interacting with biblical texts.[64] Within that context, developing experiences of relationship will provide both motivation and a noticing of cues from text and experience that can guide perception and reception of meaning.

The third culture addresses the issue of self-interests distorting what people perceive and receive by directing interpreters to not impose their aims and interests as the only ones with which interactions will be concerned. Rather, the goal is to develop mutuality that seeks through interactions with those present in the third cultural arena (the text, interpreters, and the Spirit of God) both adjustment and mutually beneficial coordination of aims and interests (Casmir 1978:251-252). Through such interactions creative configurations of meaning are perceived that are rooted in but go beyond what the interests of text and interpreters initially brought to the interaction.[65] This necessarily involves interpreters in seeking to become aware of the communicative interests of the text and being open to adjusting their understanding of those interests. Dodd's model directs interpreters to use these interactions as a means for gathering clues and inspiration for finding or constructing interpretive schemes and schemata that more adequately account for the features of the text and that bring discernment in regard to the response the text seeks to elicit. It also directs interpreters to look for what kind of address the text may provide to their own aims and interests without compromising its communicative intent.[66] Interactions provide the means for creative coordination of aims and interests to occur.[67] The goal is for tasks to be accomplished, relationships developed, and a sense of

comfort in interacting with the text to be realized that are in accord with the coordination of aims and interests that is developing between text and interpreters.

The third culture also provides a strategic means for interpreters to explore ways to fill in gaps and indeterminacies in a text created by the distance between horizons. Dodd's model directs interpreters to recognize that they are filling in these gaps and indeterminacies by employing interpretive schemes and schemata available to them.[68] These have been activated by social categorizations that features of the text have prompted them to make. For example, the description of the attire and food of John the Baptist in Mark 1:6 might lead some to categorize him as an ascetic hermit and others as a prophet like Elijah, with each categorization bringing different sets of possible interpretive schemes that could be activated. For people to interactively experiment with modifying their schemes, finding other possible schemes, or constructing new ones,[69] they need a communicative arena where they may do so without fear of condemnation, ridicule, or rejection.[70] They also need an arena where they may utilize familiar ways of interacting with the text and other interpreters, but that will also make it safe for stimulations from the text, God, and other interpreters to elicit new or modified ways of interacting. Dodd's model directs interpreters to give serious attention to developing such an environment, to keep their way of filling in gaps and indeterminacies provisional, and to be open to expanding their ways of interacting with the text. The goal is to achieve interpretive schemes and schemata that enable interpreters to fill in gaps and indeterminacies in ways that bring coherence to all features of the text and that is in accord with the mutually beneficial coordination of aims and interests that is developing between text and interpreters.

Dodd's third culture provides an arena for theological reading to occur. The third culture is inherently an arena of interpersonal as well as intercultural engagement. Dodd's model thereby directs interpreters to become personally involved with the biblical texts, engaging them as personal addressees rather than as neutral observers. The third culture provides a context for contemporary interpreters to explore what personal address the biblical text is giving to them. The theological reading rules of presuming a text has a communicative intent, attending to the whole canon and the story of God it unfolds when interpreting a text, and reading texts in the Spirit, can be interpreted by Dodd's model as functional strategies for achieving communication effectiveness.[71] Dodd's model would direct interpreters to recognize the story of God unfolded by the canon as an overarching interpretive scheme that they can increasingly grasp through interactions with the broad sweep of biblical texts. Attending to the overarching interpretive scheme becomes part of the means for perceiving the communicative intent of specific texts. Reading in the Spirit is to read as people in personal relationship with the one who inspired the texts, looking to past and present experiences of the relationship to provide cues for perceiving the interpretive schemes informing the text. Dodd's understanding of communication effectiveness is oriented towards interpersonal outcomes (such as task accomplishment, positive relationships, cultural adjustment) and would direct theological reading rules to be likewise oriented. Task accomplishment might be understood as responses to God that proceed out of our interaction with the text, positive relationship as love for God and others, and cultural adjustment as comfortableness in interacting with the text.

The third culture also provides a context for people to give attention to and practice the communal dimension of reading. The third culture is a place for interactions

that seek for communicative effectiveness to occur. Some of these interactions could include examining traditional practices that have lead up to a reading of a biblical text as that which has shaped interpretive schemes. Experimenting with new practices as a context or means of listening to a biblical text afresh could be a means of trying out alternative interpretive schemes and experiencing their veracity (or lack of veracity) to the text, the Christian tradition, and contemporary experience. Evaluating practices that have resulted from a reading of a biblical text could be a means of testing the adequacy of the interpretive schemes that have been employed in the reading of the text. Dodd's model would direct the attending to the communal dimension of reading towards achieving the interpersonal outcomes mentioned above.

The functional strategies for communication accommodation that Dodd's model indicates people should employ in the context of the third culture leaves room for a diversity of modes of interaction in order to achieve effective outcomes. Dodd's assumption that communication style affects our impressions of the communicator's characteristics directs us to engage with texts in cooperation with their language modes so that the communication style can prod or bring into play interpretive schemes and personal involvement. Practices such as dramatic reading, ritual, juxtaposing contemporary experiences with the text, etc. can be understood as means to prod the use or the construction of interpretive schemes. Hermeneutical strategies concerned with exploring a text's historical, literary, social, and canonical relations may help interpreters to perceive cues that can help them find, affirm, adjust, or construct interpretive schemes to guide the way interpreters fill in gaps and indeterminacies in the text. Dodd's model would direct interpreters to use these strategies with a view to achieving the interpersonal

outcomes he associates with communication effectiveness. They become either a means of or a means that leads to interpersonal interaction that develops relationship, accomplishes tasks, and brings adjustment. The model would also direct interpreters to modify these strategies as interactions with the text suggest more effective ways to work with the nature of the text in order to achieve these outcomes.

Discourse Analysis and Meaning

Within the literature on discourse analysis, discourse refers to language-in-use, a communicative interchange in a specific situation between two or more parties at a level of organization above the sentence.[72] Gee (1999:1) draws attention to how language-in-use can serve various functions, sometimes simultaneously. People may use language to communicate information, but they may also use it to facilitate social activities, express social identities, elicit some kind of response, etc. Sometimes functions other than communicating information are primary.[73] When examining written discourse, it is particularly easy to focus on the informational function of the language used. However, Brown and Yule (1983:4) note that even though many written texts may focus on communicating information, some written genres, such as love letters, have more to do with other functions, such as maintaining social relationships.

Discourse analysis is concerned to investigate the various things people are doing in a specific situation through their use of language and to explain the way they are employing linguistic features in their discourse to do it (Brown and Yule 1983:26). It is an approach to language analysis that examines the aims and functions that are pursued by particular uses of language and the effect these have on the meaning people perceive and receive from that use of the language. For example, the exclamation "Hail, king of

the Jews" could be used to communicate contempt, to recognize a person's royal status, to indicate who a person is and will be, etc. The effect of the words and the meaning attributed to them will change in accord with the function people perceive them to be pursuing. Discourse analysis, explores how people use linguistic and paralinguistic features to bring into play various co-textual and contextual relations[74] that facilitate the achieving of the function(s) their use of language is serving.[75]

Joel B. Green employs discourse analysis as a strategy for discerning the aims and functions that are pursued by a biblical text and for interpreting the text in the light of those aims and functions. He also uses it to discern the aims and functions that are pursued by readers as they interact with the text and the effect this has on their interpretation. To discern the aims and functions, he investigates personal, cultural and literary relations within which a biblical text has been and is being set, both by the writer(s) of the text and by those reading it. He seeks to discover the personal, cultural and literary patterns that can account for the placement of the text into those relations and that indicate the function the text is serving (see Figure 2).[76] The following will briefly present Green's adaptation of discourse analysis to biblical study by reviewing the assumptions that provide a context for it. This will be followed by a description of the kinds of questions that it pursues. I will then show the ways that Green's use of discourse analysis addresses the biblical hermeneutical issues discussed above. Theoretical and empirical warrants for Green's use of discourse analysis and its address to the issues will be interwoven throughout.

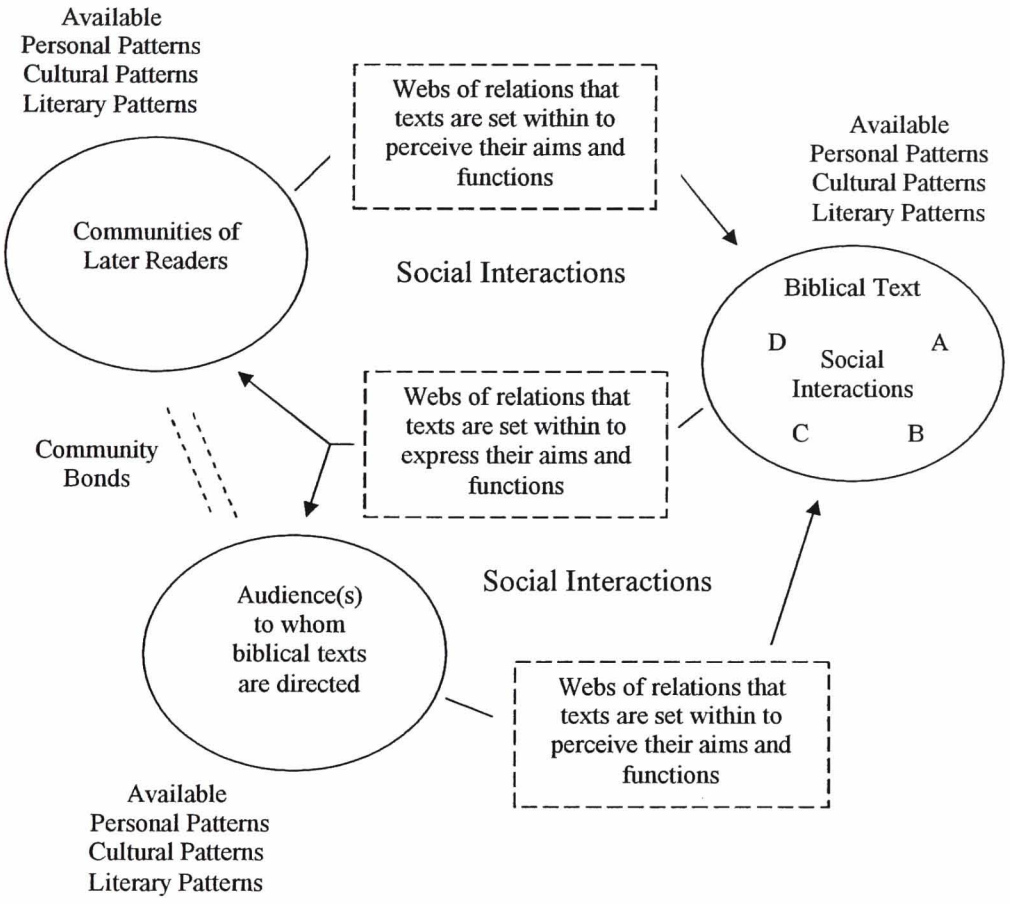

Figure 2: Relations Investigated by Discourse Analysis

Green's Adaptation of Discourse Analysis

One of Green's fundamental assumptions is that interaction with biblical texts can have the effect of reforming our dispositions and influencing our practices in the world. He engages in the discourse analysis of biblical texts with interests in that effect being realized in church communities (1995c:412-413; 1997:12; 2000:43, 2002b). Green

follows Bourdieu's (1991) contention that people form and are forming a *habitus* (sets of dispositions) that incline them to act and react in certain ways. The habitus is inculcated through social interaction and reflects the social conditions within which those interactions occur. The habitus does not determine practices, but it does orient people's perceptions, interests, and actions, providing some regularity in the way people act and react in specific social contexts.[77] Green is interested in people interacting with the Bible in ways that facilitate the ongoing reformation of their habitus, thereby orienting and influencing their practices in whatever social context they find themselves. He uses discourse analysis as a means for integrating and adapting the capabilities of a number of interpretive strategies available in biblical studies towards this end (1992:471; 1995b:175,177; 1997:1,12). Discourse analysis is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from anthropology, rhetoric, semiotics, sociology, literary analysis, reader response, etc. Green sees it as providing a way to integrate and direct interpretive strategies rooted in these disciplines towards the goal of interacting with a biblical text in such a way that the biblical text reforms our dispositions and influences our practices in the world.

Another of Green's (1995b:178) fundamental assumptions is that we should study a biblical text as an act of communication rather than using it primarily as a window to view and study something else, such as the intent in the mind of its author, the traditions that formed the materials used by the author, or the possible historical events that might account for what the text reports.[78] This assumption leads Green to focus on the biblical text as a literary cultural product that seeks to achieve a communicative aim. As cultural products, biblical texts were composed within particular cultural worlds and made use of

words, modes of expression, events, and relational patterns that existed in those worlds. As literary works, they may use such things in innovative ways and seek effects that alter, subvert, or even transcend the cultural worlds within which they were written.[79]

For example, the first two chapters of Luke make use of a cultural pattern that ascribed honorable status to people by virtue of their ancestry. Luke tells us that Zechariah belonged to the priestly line of Abijah, Elizabeth was a descendent of Aaron, and Joseph was of the house of David.[80] In regard to Mary, however, he provides nothing about her lineage and whatever honorable status she may have received through marriage to Joseph is forfeited by her pregnancy.[81] God himself grants lowly Mary the status of one who is "favored by God" (Luke 1:28) and chosen for a special role in God's redemptive activity (Luke 1:31-33), a status she embraces by affirming she is the Lord's servant (Luke 1:38).[82] Green (1992: 461) argues that Luke's literary strategy employs "the normal, culturally defined means of social stratification in the Mediterranean world" with a view to critiquing them, and to urging us to accept in their place the status God provides to those who participate in his salvific purpose.[83] Studying Luke as an act of communication, as a literary cultural product, focuses attention on how Luke has "ordered" (Luke 1:3) his use and presentation of things such as lineage identification to achieve a communicative aim. It also focuses attention on how such use and presentation would likely be perceived and received by the possible readers that the biblical text appears to be addressing (Green 1997:12).[84]

Green (1995b:180-181) further assumes that communication is social, transcending sentences – embedded in ongoing social interaction that contributes to the meaning people perceive. Green (1995b:180) states that "the same words, uttered in two

different settings or among different people, will not necessarily or even likely carry the same meaning." As has already been indicated above, an exclamation such as "Hail, king of the Jews" could be used to communicate such different things as contempt for Jesus, recognition of Jesus' royal status, or a prophecy of whom Jesus is and will be. People's interpretation of what the exclamation is communicating depends upon their perception of the situation in which it is said, who is saying it, to whom it is being said, to what end it is said, what precedes and follows the exclamation, experiences with the usage of similar exclamations, etc. People utter and interpret language-in-use, such as this exclamation, within webs of social relations. People who read this exclamation will employ their perception of characteristics of the social situation and social interaction to assess the function the exclamation is serving, the response it is eliciting, and the social relations it is expressing.[85]

For example, suppose we are aware that the exclamation was repeatedly spoken by Roman soldiers to Jesus after they dressed him in a purple robe and placed a crown of thorns on his head, and as they struck him on the head and spit on him. We might conclude from the incongruity between the soldiers' actions and words and our social experiences with such incongruities that the expression is functioning as a means to mock Jesus. Suppose we also are aware that Jesus had just been condemned to death by Pilate, the Roman governor, under the charge of claiming to be king of the Jews. This awareness might lead us to perceive the mocking words as communicating the soldiers' identification with Roman political power and domination over the Jews and their freedom to arrogantly exercise and maintain that power. Suppose we also become aware that after this episode and Jesus' execution, God raised Jesus from the dead and Jesus sat

at the right hand of God. Through this awareness we might begin to wonder if the words were an ironic prophecy that truly identified Jesus as Israel's messianic king, eliciting repentance and faith from us. The assumption that communication is social, transcending sentences, leads Green to carefully look for characteristics of the social situation and social interaction within which a biblical text is set by those writing and reading the text. He does this with a view to assessing the function the biblical text is serving, the response it is eliciting, and the social relations it is expressing.[86]

A fourth assumption is that language-in-use is always culturally embedded (Green 1994:63; 1995b:181-182; 1997:12).[87] The way people use language is shaped by their knowledge and experience of the ways language is used in their own culture and the culture of those they perceive they are addressing. They rely on people to employ shared cultural knowledge and experience to interpret what the language is communicating.[88] For example, Luke's use of language such as "priestly line," "descendent of Aaron," and "house of David" is shaped by and assumes awareness of Jewish lineage categories and knowledge of the way such language ascribes honorable social status in that culture. As mentioned earlier, Luke may use this language in a way that critiques, subverts, or works against the way it is commonly used in the culture, but he still relies on people to be aware of the common cultural usage in order to discern the critique.

When people from cultures other than the ones shaping Luke's use of language read Luke, they can easily embed Luke's language into cultural ways of using language with which they are familiar, but which are foreign to Luke. Green (1994:60-65; 1995b:181) observes how this has often occurred with analyses of the way Luke uses the language of wealth and poverty. He (1994:62) states, "Recent studies of the poor in Luke

have largely kept at center stage the economically destitute." Such studies identify the poor with those who lack property and other essential means of livelihood. Green notices how well this identification fits with contemporary Weberian-type categories of class and class situation, but argues that it does not fit well with the cultural categories of Greco-Roman antiquity, the usage of "poor" in the Old Testament, and the way Luke uses "poor."[89] The assumption that language-in-use is always culturally embedded leads Green to argue that we need to become conscious of the cultural patterns we are using in our interpretation and be willing to adjust them. We need to inquire into the nature of the cultural patterns a biblical text's usage of language presupposes and take them into account in our interpretation.

A fifth assumption is that humans are meaning-making. People have a powerful urge to make sense out of whatever they encounter. Green (1995b:182) quotes Brown and Yule's (1983:66) statement, "The natural effort of hearers and readers alike is to attribute relevance and coherence to the text they encounter until they are forced not to." Brown and Yule go on to state that people will try to decipher meaning from what look like signs etched in stone in a desert. If it is possible to do so, they will react to the sounds of their infants and the murmurs of gravely ill friends by attributing to those sounds a coherent communicative meaning relevant to the context of the situation. Stubbs (1983:5) observes that "however odd the utterance, hearers will do their utmost to make sense of the language they hear, by bringing to bear on it all possible knowledge and interpretation."[90]

There are many ways that people can use the same language, thereby making it possible for people to make sense of it in a diversity of ways. Green (1995b:182) observes how people employ both linguistic and paralinguistic factors to dismiss unlikely

possibilities and bring coherence to their understanding of what the language is communicating. For example, people who overhear a remark being made in another room such as "Quit pulling my leg!" will begin to search for a framework that will make the best sense of the statement, picking up what linguistic and paralinguistic cues as they can in regard to whether it is to be taken literally or metaphorically. Those who hear the statement in the midst of discourse with the one saying it will already have a framework of such cues that they use to make sense of the statement (such as an attempt at humor preceding the statement or the physical action of pulling someone's leg in the midst of some activity). People will also try to make sense out of what biblical texts are saying by employing linguistic and paralinguistic cues. The assumption that humans are meaning-making underlies the concern of discourse analysis to carefully observe what cues are available and what cues both the text and readers are employing to bring coherence to the text.

The Questions Green Pursues (Figure 3)

In the context of the above assumptions, Green (1995b:183) states that "discourse analysis brings to the fore for investigation the social and linguistic webs within which speech occurs and derives its significance." Such investigation can include the webs that those interacting within a biblical text are employing, the webs the text appears to assume its audience will employ when reading it, and the webs those reading the text (including ourselves) actually employ. It raises questions about the relation of a biblical text to its co-text, discourse situation, and pools of presuppositions assumed to be available to those involved in the discourse. It raises these questions in the context of the primary question of what communicative aims and functions the text is seeking to achieve. What is God

seeking to do in our lives through the communication of the text? The following will describe the significance of co-text, discourse situation, and presupposition pools and the kinds of questions they bring into play.

Primary Question:
What communicative aims and functions is the text seeking to achieve with us?

Analysis Questions:

1. How is this text co-textually situated?
    a. What genre and literary patterns are used?
    b. What is given prominence by the textual arrangement?
    c. What instruction and expectations are unfolded by the sequence of the text?
2. What cues does the text employ to indicate the discourse situation? What world and values are taken for granted in the discourse situation?
    a. What is the socio-historical situation within which the text was written?
    b. What world and values in that situation are taken for granted and addressed by the text?
    c. What is the socio-historical situation within which we read the text?
    d. What world and values do we take for granted and perceive to be addressed in our situation?

3. What presupposition pools does the text assume its readers possess and will employ? What cues does the text provide to activate the knowledge it presupposes?
    a. What general knowledge of the world does the text presuppose?
    b. What awareness of the exigencies that gave rise to the discourse is presupposed?
    c. What information that has been previously related in the discourse is presupposed?
    d. What texts could be available to inform the text?
    e. Is there a significant volume of indications that a text is aware of and drawn to a particular text or group of texts and their portrayal of events, persons, and relationships?

Figure 3: Questions Pursued by Discourse Analysis

Green's discourse analysis closely examines a text's relation to its co-text, seeking to answer questions about what cues the arrangement of the literary text gives for our reading of it. Co-text refers to "the string of linguistic data within which a text is set" (Green 1995b:183). Green (1995b:183) quotes Tannen's (1993:14-15) contention that "The only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or hear about."[91] The arrangement of a text and the way it is situated within its literary co-text sets up various connections. These connections stimulate people to develop and adjust various expectations, questions, uncertainties, etc. that they bring to their reading of the text as they seek to make sense of it.

The literary arrangement of a text within its co-text stimulates us to see connections in several ways. Green (1995b:183) states that readers employ a basic dictionary, assumptions about genre, and experiences with other texts to help them interpret what a particular text is saying. The literary arrangement of a text may make use of and be situated in patterns that are commonly employed in literature of a certain type (genre), thereby stimulating us to employ earlier experiences we have had with similar literary arrangements. This can guide our expectations of what kind of text we are studying, what types of functions it pursues, and how various features of the co-text connect with each other and the text we are studying. For example, Eco (1992:64-65) states that if a story begins with an established stylistic convention such as "Once upon a time," people familiar with the genre convention will think that the story should probably be read as a fairy tale.[92] People familiar with Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and its genre will be stimulated to hear something similar to it in Mary's Song in Luke 1:46-55.

Hannah poetically interweaves what God has done for her with who God is and the ways he delivers his people. Her experience is a specific instance that expresses the saving purpose and character of God in relation to his people. Mary does the same, prompting us to read each verse as part of a poem that describes and responds to the saving purpose and character of God. Awareness of genre and literary patterns encourages us to inquire into what genre and patterns may be present by the arrangement of a text in its co-text and what types of expectations they elicit.

Green (1995b:184) states that another way the literary arrangement helps us to see connections is by "staging." Authors gives us cues regarding the "aboutness" of a text by staging in the text and its co-text the relative prominence of the text's various segments. This is done through the selection and repetition of words, use of literary patterns (rhyme, parallelism, alliteration, etc.), the characters placed (and not placed) in a subject position or at the center of a narrative scene, etc. (Brown and Yule 1983:134; Green 1995b:184). Authors assume we have had previous experience with the use of language that will help us employ such cues to perceive the focal concern of the text and the connection between elements in a text and the surrounding co-text. Awareness of staging encourages us to inquire what is given prominence by the arrangement of the text and what this tells us of the "aboutness" of the text.

For example, Green (1997:98-101) observes how Mary's Song describes a number of acts of grace and power by placing aorist tense active voice verbs in the anterior position and repeatedly locating God as the subject of the verbs. The first half of the song deals with what God has graciously done for Mary and the second half with what God has done for Israel. The juxtaposition of the two halves with each other

suggests they are parallel, pointing to what God has done for Mary as concerning the whole nation of Israel. Verses such as 1:52 and 1:53 place expressions in parallel to juxtapose images with each other (e.g. brought down rulers/lift up humble; filled the hungry/sent the rich away empty), thereby indicating what semantic fields the images are working within and expressing the transposition in social relations that God is doing. The repetition of God as subject and the conclusion of the song suggest that the text is focused upon God's activity via Mary in fulfilling his covenantal promise to Israel. The mention of "his servant" (Luke 1:48,54) echoes Mary's earlier response ("I am the Lord's servant") to Gabriel's announcement (Luke 1:26-38), thereby connecting the song to Mary's embracement of God's saving purpose. All of this staging directs us to see the "aboutness" of the text as concerned with the character of God's saving activity to fulfill his covenantal promise and the call to respond like Mary to that activity.[93]

Green (1995b:184) observes yet another way literary arrangement helps us see connections by citing Brown and Yule's (1983:46) statement that our interpretation of all sentences in a discourse besides the first sentence is forcibly constrained by the preceding text. He also notes how subsequent texts can re-shape or set aside the way that our interpretation was initially constrained by our reading of preceding text. Brown and Yule (1983:133-134) claim that each sentence builds with those that follow "a developing, cumulative instruction" that helps those reading or hearing to construct a coherent understanding of what the text is communicating. Our perception of a biblical text's relation to the "developing and cumulative instruction" that has come before and after it will set up our expectations of what ways a biblical text is using its language and what meaning is to be given to its terms.

For example, if we perceive the way Luke uses ancestry language to set up a critique of it through the example of God's affirmation of Mary, it will set up an expectation that Luke may continue to sustain a critique of the prevailing honor/shame social structure. It opens us to the possibility that Luke may engage in yet further critiques of common cultural patterns as he portrays God's redemptive purpose. As we continue to read, subsequent material may recast our expectations as it stimulates us to reconsider our interpretation of earlier material.[94] Re-reading the text and co-text will continue a process of recasting expectations "as readers relate and re-relate a text to its co-text (Green 1995b:184).[95] Awareness that the co-text provides a developing and cumulative instruction encourages us to keep asking what that instruction is and what expectations it seeks to set up.

Green's discourse analysis also asks questions about the relation of a text to its discourse situation. Green (1995b:184) defines the discourse situation as "the temporal moment of a communication act." Green's concern is to investigate what world and values are taken for granted in that moment and he employs social-scientific analysis to assist that investigation. There are two discourse situations to be examined. The first is the socio-historical situation within which a biblical text was written and the way the text participates in the values that were current in that situation. The second is the socio-historical situation within which contemporary readers are reading the text and the values they are taking for granted as they read. Their reading creates a new temporal moment for the text to communicate to them and calls for both the values the text takes for granted and those the readers take for granted to be recognized. The earlier discussion of the assumption that language-in-use is always culturally embedded has already indicated that

the values readers are taking for granted may be quite different than the ones a biblical text is assuming its readers will employ.

How might we perceive the world and values taken for granted in the discourse situation within which a text like Mary's Song was written? Green investigates what language is used, the way it is used, and possible background that could account for that use. For example, he (1997:104-5) observes the words and images Mary' Song uses to depict God's powerful acts. The song places the acts of "scatters the proud," "brings down the powerful," and "sends the rich away empty" into apposition with each other. Over against the proud, the powerful, and the rich, the song places the lowly and the hungry. Green (1997:102-105) investigates the referents such terms and phrases could have in the situation within which Luke writes. He examines both examples of Old Testament usage and examples of their usage in and relationship to Greco-Roman situations in that time period. He also investigates the way that Luke uses the terms in Luke and Acts, examining the words Luke associates with them, the situations in which they are employed, and the roles they play in those situations.[96] From that investigation Green concludes that the proud, powerful and rich refer to "persons who grasp for social respect and positions of honor, who exclude the less fortunate and socially unacceptable from their circles of kinship, who enjoy the power that accompanies their privileged status." In a discourse situation where the proud, powerful, and rich define much of the social structure, Mary's Song portrays God as taking the side of the lowly and the hungry, working in Mary's life and in the whole social order to "subvert the very structure of society that supports and perpetuates such distinctions" (Green 1997:105).

How might we perceive the world and values taken for granted in the discourse situation within which readers are reading a text like Mary's Song? Green asks readers to reflect on and discuss questions such as these: Who are the powerful in your society? What are their characteristics? Can you associate the words "proud" and "rich" with them? How do they affect the lives of your church or fellowship? Who are the hungry and the lowly in your society? What are their characteristics? Does the activity of the powerful have anything to do with the situation of the hungry and the lowly? How do people in your society think God relates to the powerful, the hungry and the lowly?[97] Through discussing such questions, people become conscious of the world and values they are bringing to their reading of the text. Green (1995b:185) holds that through discourse analysis readers need to become aware of and seek to understand the world and values they bring to the text in their contemporary discourse situation and the world and values present in the discourse situation within which a text was written.

Green's discourse analysis also asks questions about the relation of a text to presupposition pools. Culler (2001:101) states that in the act of writing an author inevitably postulates an inter-subjective body of knowledge (presupposition pools) that people must employ to make the writing intelligible. Green (1995b:185) defines presupposition pools as the pools of knowledge that each participant in a discourse assumes the other participant(s) possess(es) and will employ as they engage in the discourse. These pools consist of general knowledge of the worlds to which a text gives witness and was written within, awareness of the exigencies that gave rise to the discourse, and information that has been related in the process of the discourse.[98]

For example, in regard to general knowledge, Green (1995b:185) observes that Luke seems to assume that his audience knows the LXX well enough that he can make use of its vocabulary and themes without identifying that he is doing so. The discussion above has already indicated that Luke assumes his readers have general knowledge of Jewish lineage categories and the honor and status that are attached to them. In regard to the exigencies that gave rise to the discourse, Luke's introduction suggests Theophilus has a need to know the certainty of the things he has been taught (Luke 1:1-4). Various features in Luke's narrative seems to assume that what the Christian movement embraced as God's purpose was a matter of controversy and uncertainty, calling for Luke's efforts to persuasively reveal God's purpose via the events he relates (Green 1997:21-22). In regard to information that has already been related in the discourse, Luke can assume that when he gives the account of John's preaching in a time period ruled by particular powerful leaders (Luke 3:1-20), his readers are aware of the critique of the powerful and the rich in Mary's Song.

Brown and Yule (1983:80-81) observe that within the extensive presupposition pools available to people, there are various discourse subjects (knowledge related to a particular concern). These subjects are activated in a discourse through the mention of some item, an allusion to something, language that echoes the language of texts or experiences assumed to be available to participants, etc. For example, the mention of "descendant of Aaron" (Luke 1:5) can encourage people to activate knowledge related to such subjects as narratives related to the line of Aaron, the role and status of descendents of Aaron in Jewish society, and any other material that might be relevant to the use of such a phrase in the discourse situation. The language and style of Mary's Song can

encourage people to activate knowledge related to such subjects as the psalm-like character of the song, its likeness to passages like Hannah's prayer, narratives of God's relations with his people, the themes, emotions, and functions of such passages, etc. The point Brown and Yule are making is that ongoing discourse can keep on encouraging people to activate selections of knowledge necessary to make sense of the discourse without explicitly stating all of that knowledge. The discourse analyst can inquire what cues the text provides to activate or recall assumed knowledge and use the cues to guide their efforts to locate the knowledge to which the cues point.

For biblical texts, an important source of presupposed knowledge is other biblical texts. Green (1995b:186) states that "a number of NT authors were especially adept at drawing their texts into interpretive webs with the LXX, so that the ongoing story of divine redemption sheds light on the present, just as the story of Jesus is allowed to interpret the story of Israel." Old Testament texts, such as Psalm 105, also have webs of relationships with the narratives of God's creating and redeeming activity recorded in Genesis and Exodus. Citing Fishbane's work on inner biblical exegesis, Hays (1989:21) observes that within Israel, significant speech is speech that is oriented around biblical texts.

This phenomena fit with what literary critics call intertextuality. Still and Worton (1990:1-2) state that every writer has been a reader of texts that inevitably influence the language, the references, and the quotations that the writer employs. Readers' understanding of a text is also influenced by relationships they perceive it to have with various texts they have read earlier. Green (1995b:186) observes that biblical writers (and readers) may consciously or unconsciously utilize common linguistic forms, story

patterns, vocabulary, language style, direct quotations, and indirect quotations that draw from their familiarity with other biblical texts. Hays (1989:23) uses the figure of an echo to refer to these various ways that a text may employ the language and patterns of other biblical texts. He states that the volume of echo decreases as a text moves from direct quotation to allusion to what might be called an atmosphere of language use that reflects other texts. The weaker the echo, the less the assumed intertextual relations become determinate for perceiving how a text may be drawing upon or engaging other texts.

How is it possible to know a particular text has drawn upon other biblical texts? Green (1997:13-14) observes that often a text such as Luke 3:3-6 may be explicit that it is quoting a text. In other places we can ask questions about whether other texts could be available to inform the text we are examining. We can also ask whether there is a significant volume of evidence to indicate that a text is aware of and drawn to a particular text or group of texts and their portrayal of events and persons. For example, Green (1997:52-57) notices the many points of contact the birth narratives in Luke 1-2 have with Old Testament narratives. The narratives share the elements of an annunciation form: announcement of birth, the name of the child, and the future of the child.[99] Luke's narratives also have affinities to a commissioning form where a person sees an angel or some manifestation of God and is commissioned for some role in God's purpose.[100] Explicit mention of "our ancestor" "Abraham" and concern with God's covenant to Abraham in Luke 1:55, 73 further cue us that Luke is familiar with these Old Testament texts and working in interaction with their linguistic world. Green (1997:14) states that we do not need to be concerned with determining exactly how one text has employed

another. Rather, we can become aware of how a text serves as a kind of echo chamber that interplays past textual voices with the text's present concern.

Green (1995c:420) utilizes the metaphor of "bottom-up" and "top-down" processing as a way to describe how questions concerning the relation of a biblical text to its co-text, discourse situation, and presupposition pools may be pursued. "Bottom-up" refers to carefully examining details as we pursue questions about the meaning and use of words and sentences, building up a composite meaning as we work out their relations to each other. "Top-down" refers to utilizing the broader schemes we have already constructed as a means for anticipating what the next group of sentences is most likely to mean. Both processes go on simultaneously as "the ongoing negotiation of the textually embedded constraints on the possible meaning of the text." Throughout the analysis the concern is to discern the various things people are doing in a specific situation through their use of language and to explain the way they are employing linguistic and paralinguistic features in their discourse to do it.

Address to Hermeneutical Issues

Green's approach to discourse analysis addresses issues of aims and interests by making it a central concern to examine what aims and interests are pursued by a biblical text and what aims and interests those reading the text are pursuing. Green's interest in the biblical text reforming our dispositions and influencing our practices in the world requires openness to the communicative and transformational aim that the text is pursuing. His assumptions that biblical texts should be studied as acts of communication and that ongoing social interactions contribute to the meaning people perceive direct discourse analysis to become social interaction that brings the aims and interests of text

and interpreters into dialog with each other. The questions that discourse analysis pursues in regard to the relations a text has with its co-text, discourse situation, and presupposition pools are pursued within the primary interest of discerning and responding to the communicative aims and functions the text is pursuing. The concern to also inquire into the webs of relations that we put a text within provides the possibility for the textually embedded constraints of the text to question or confirm the adequacy, validity, or appropriateness of the relations we use. The analysis can help us to become conscious of the way we are making sense of the text as a whole, what is influencing us to make sense of it in this way, and what the text is directing us to employ to make sense of it.

Discourse analysis in itself does not necessarily make us conscious that our aims and interests may be distorting our reading of a text in ways that protect our power, privilege, or self-interests. However, the attention it gives to the social and linguistic webs we are employing when we read a text and the webs the text appears to assume its audience will employ provides opportunity for such consciousness to arise. Green (1995c:416) states

> Appreciating as fully as possible the self-identities and experiences from which we interpret opens further the potential for our own experiences and commitments to come under critical scrutiny. We bring to texts preunderstandings that may require emendation, that may be judged in the reading task as parochial, egocentric, and so on.

It may take the activity of the Spirit of God and the voice of others in the community of God's people to draw attention to features of the text and webs of relations that we are overlooking. As we are open to taking seriously these features and webs, they may help us hear the communicative challenge of the text to our self-interests. Green (1995c:420) states that "in the practice of reading NT texts, we turn and return to ask whether we have

discerned its communicative intention. Have we heard its questions? Have we entertained its perspective? Have we respected its discursive aim?"

Green's discourse analysis provides a strategic means for interpreters to explore ways to fill in gaps and indeterminacies in a text created by the distance between the horizons of biblical texts and the horizons of contemporary readers. The focus of the analysis upon the contextual and co-textual webs of relations within which a text is set provides the opportunity for those relations to stimulate and constrain what we employ to fill in those gaps and indeterminacies. His discourse analysis directs us to look to the literary arrangement of the text and co-text, the staging of features in the text, the mention of people and events, the mention of paralinguistic phenomena, the style of language, etc. to provide cues to what knowledge the text is assuming people will provide when they read. Discourse analysis directs us to follow these cues to the social worlds and values the text was written within and is addressing. The investigation helps relational patterns appropriate to those social worlds to come into view that intuitive and analogical modes of understanding may connect and interweave with patterns in our own social worlds. The relational patterns we perceive stimulate and constrain the possibilities we see for filling in gaps and indeterminacies in ways that bring coherency to the features of the text and the communicative aim the text pursues.

Discourse analysis also directs us to fill in gaps and indeterminacies by seeking to follow the direction of textual cues to the intertextual network a text is presupposing and within which it is pursuing its concerns. It examines how the text is interacting with this intertextual network and what this suggests in regard to ways to fill in gaps and indeterminacies. It directs us to consider how the text is participating in the story of God

unfolded by the Bible, how that story fills in gaps and indeterminacies, and how the text invites our participation in that story.

Green's discourse analysis provides a means for theologically reading biblical texts as addressees rather than as neutral observers. Discourse analysis could be employed in the context of trying to be neutral observers, but Green's assumptions direct us to employ it as a community of people who are engaging in discourse with the text and its communicative aim. The analysis is oriented towards perceiving what the text seeks to communicate and effect within our Christian communities. Green assumes that interaction with biblical texts has the capacity to reform and influence us. He (2000:42) affirms McClendon's (1986:31) motto that "the present Christian community is the primitive community and the eschatological community," interpreting this to mean that biblical texts address all Christian communities. The questions Green's analysis directs us to ask provide a means for discerning the social and linguistic webs within which the significance of biblical texts are derived. Such webs include the intertextual network that a text has with other parts of the Bible and the overall biblical story. Green directs us to pursue these questions with a view to hearing and responding to the text's communicative aim. Following McClendon (1986:34), Green (1995c:427) states that "In our contexts, then, we join in the exploration of how our lives as God's people might be 'construed via narratives that are historically set in another time and place but display redemptive power here and now.'"

Green does not say much about how a community or fellowship of Christians might pursue discourse analysis as a community or group project. He does affirm how other voices in the Christian community can help us notice webs of relationship we have

neglected and the parochial or self-serving nature of our interpretations. He also affirms that reading of the Bible (including reading that stems from discourse analysis) should be pursued in the context of faith communities who seek for the Spirit of God to reform their dispositions and shape their practices in the world. In Green (2002b:47) he states, "Needed most are not good methods for reading the Bible, but good people reading the Bible – that is, people deeply embedded in faithful communities of discipleship, people in whom the Spirit is actualizing the Word of God and, thus, for whom the Word of God is authenticated." Green also does not say much about engaging biblical texts in cooperation with their language modes. His discourse analysis does direct us to seek to discern the language modes employed by a text and provides a means for doing so. His concern for readers to engage with the communicative aim of a text implicitly directs readers to read the texts in cooperation with their language modes.

Structures of Religious World Construction and Meaning

William E. Paden (1994) presents a conceptual framework for comparing religious worlds that synthesizes some major trajectories in the comparative study of religion with the conceptual model of a plurality of worlds. At the heart of his framework are four structures of language and behavior that can be used as lenses to examine and compare how people are understanding and relating to what they deem to be sacred. Though other structures may exist, Paden argues that these four are pervasive great themes in diverse religious systems. He believes that through filling them with particular language and behavioral options people construct and express the religious worlds within which they live. He identifies these structures as (1) myth, (2) ritual, (3) gods, and (4) systems of purity. The significance of these structures is such that when communities

embrace fundamental changes in their content, the religious worlds within which they live become fundamentally changed.

Paden does not bring up for discussion how his framework might be used for biblical interpretation or how it might address the issues of biblical hermeneutics discussed above. However, his four structures of religious world construction suggest avenues for perceiving the religious worlds presented by biblical texts and engaging them with our own worlds. The following will briefly examine Paden's structures of religious world construction as a conceptual framework for comparative study of religious worlds and the theoretical and empirical warrants supporting it. This will be followed by a description of the ways that each of the structures construct religious worlds, the way each presents a way to understand and compare religious worlds, and the theoretical and empirical warrants supporting this understanding of them. I will then indicate ways that these structures may be used to address the biblical hermeneutical issues discussed above.

Comparative Study of Religious Worlds

One of Paden's (1994:11,41,48) fundamental assumptions is that the comparative study of religion is concerned with the experience of the sacred or holy in different religious systems. The term "sacred" refers to what adherents in a religious system experience as having extraordinary power and reality, and that they serve as organizing points of reference for how they construe their world and their lives. Paden indicates he understands the sacred in a way that is influenced by Rudolph Otto (1958) and Emile Durkheim (1965). Otto labeled the experience of the sacred or holy as "the sense of the numinous," the sense of a mysterious reality that is powerful, awesome, attracting, and daunting, a sense of the "wholly Other." Durkheim understood the sacred as that which

communities set apart from the profane, and which communities obliged their members to relate to in set apart or sacred ways.[101] Paden states that the experience of the sacred may be associated with such diverse things as personal beings, traditions, principles, or objects.[102] In comparative study, the identification of something as sacred does not assume the ultimate reality or unreality of what is considered sacred, but serves as a recognition of what people are taking to be sacred.

In order to compare the experience of the sacred in different religious systems, Paden (1994:51-65) makes use of the concept of "world." He follows Berger's (1969:3) understanding that "every human society is an enterprise of world-building," the ongoing construction of a structured habitat within which participants in the society live.[103] World-building is a collective enterprise that occurs as people socially "shape tools, invent languages, adhere to values, devise institutions, and so on" (Berger 1969:7). A world is maintained and has reality for its participants as long as their community engages in the social processes that uphold them.[104] Paden holds that the social processes that construct and maintain religious worlds are ones that focus upon and relate to what communities of religious adherents deem to be sacred. They are social processes that employ language and behavior related to the sacred within the framework of structures that have formative and maintaining power.[105] Paden understands myth, ritual, gods, and systems of purity to be four such world-building structures (see Figure 4).

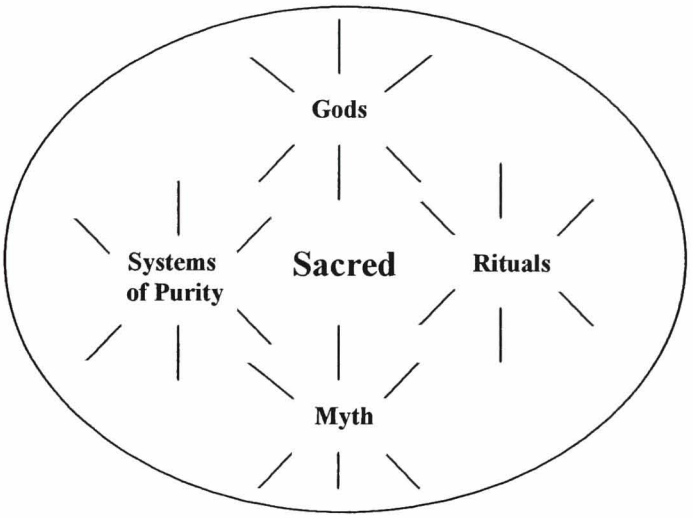

Figure 4: Structures that Construct Religious Worlds

Paden (1994:33) holds that the goal of comparative study is to understand, rather than to explain, the experience of others.[106] He pursues two inter-related kinds of understanding through the conceptual category of religious worlds. First (emic understanding), what do religious expressions mean to the people inhabiting the particular historical matrix of their religious world? Paden (1994:54) states that "understanding others...means seeing their expressions from precisely within the perspective of their own location." This involves a detailed study of the particular history and contours of a religious world, and listening to the understanding of the world expressed by those living in that world (Paden 1994:46-47,163). It also involves suspending judgment on whether the referent of religious expressions has reality apart

from people's social construction of their reality. Such judgments may impose categories that blind us to the functions participants see their expressions to play in their world.[107] Paden (1994:4) states that "the guiding principle of comparative study must be that each religious community acts within the premises of its own universe, its own logic, its own answers to its own questions."

Second (etic understanding), in what ways do religious expressions in one religious world function to define, construct, and maintain that world and how do they participate in cross-cultural patterns of religious world definition, construction, and maintenance? Paden (1994:44-45) sees the work of van der Leeuw (1963) and Eliade (1959 and 1969) pursuing this kind of understanding.[108] They built on the work of earlier efforts to recognize and classify similarities between religious expressions in many cultures.[109] As various cross-cultural patterns emerged, they sought to understand the meaning of those patterns. For example, Eliade (1959:20-65) noticed the widely dispersed cross-cultural presence of symbols that he called an *axis mundi*, or center of the world. Such symbols could be temples, shrines, mountains, trees, a city, a person, the human spine, etc. They are places where the sacred connects with people and provides them with cosmic orientation. People order the space within which they live in relation to such centers. Paden (1994:161-163) sees such patterns as providing comparative perspective on how religious expressions participate in common cross-cultural patterns and contribute to the defining of a religious world. Comparative perspective gives "context, dimensionality, and indeed a certain humanity to particular histories and traditions" (1994:45).

Paden (1994:8,64,163) holds that in order to understand the experience of others, we need to find and utilize appropriate bridging categories that are genuinely cross-cultural. He (1994:64) states, "Understanding is possible in principle because, in spite of otherness, there is also commonality. No religious culture is so totally unique as to defy outside comprehension." But if this is so, it raises the question of what categories enable us to hear what others say. Paden argues for the categories of world, myth, ritual, gods, and purity. World-building is common to all people. Myth, ritual, gods, and purity are ubiquitous socializing structures that people use to shape and embody their religious worlds.[110] People (emic understanding) interpret the meaning of their religious expressions by the way those expressions relate to the sacred within these structures. Themes and patterns such as the *axis mundi* (etic understanding) also make themselves apparent through their particular expressions and relationships within these structures.

Paden (1994:53-60,161-170) recognizes that every classification scheme, including his, pursues a particular agenda. He sees his four structures to provide a means for discerning where the sacred is located in a religious world and what people are saying and doing to relate to the sacred, thereby socially constructing their religious world.[111] They provide a means for discerning the patterns and shape that people's religious expressions are giving to their religious world. They provide lenses for discerning ways that patterns of relating to the sacred in one religious world are analogous and are different to patterns of relating in another religious world.[112] The perception of analogous patterns helps us to understand the significance for common human concerns that the sacred and that particular language and behavioral options structuring existence around the sacred have in a religious world. The process of comparison through such structures

stimulates reflection on the significance that such patterns have or could have in our own religious world. Paden sees these four structures as working categories, valuable only as long as they continue to fit with the phenomena that are actually there and enhance our understanding of the way language and behavior in relation to the sacred is shaping a religious world. [113]

Myth

Myth refers to the oral and literary stories and the various artistic expressions that people use to make intelligible the sacred powers and relationships that are fundamental to their religious worlds.[114] In contrast to popular associations of the word "myth" with stories that are imaginary and untrue, Paden (1994:70-73) uses "myth" in the sense of stories that describe a reality lived, expressing sacred purposes and values.[115] They are stories that recount the origin of the main features of a religious world; that name the powers that create, maintain, and recreate the religious world; and that present authoritative prototypes for human behavior in that religious world. In this sense, a particular story is not mythic because it depicts sacred powers at work doing marvelous activity. A story becomes mythic for a community of people when the community believes the story to depict ultimate truth and trusts the story to guide life in relation to the sacred (Paden 1994:79,82).

Paden (1994:8) holds that myth structures religious worlds by articulating the foundations of what is sacred, giving an account of the origin of what people in a religious world deem to be "great, real, or holy." He also holds that it provides a matrix for religious practice, presenting prototypes for human behavior. Several examples of myths found in diverse religious worlds can illustrate his contention.

Lester (1987:62) outlines a narration of the journey of the Buddha from his former lives to birth as Prince Gautama, renunciation of worldly things at age 29, enlightenment at Gaya at age 35, his first sermon that set in motion the wheel of the Dharma (the doctrine and path taught by the Buddha), and his death at age 80. He states that the narrative "portrays a wondrous being who is supremely confident, completely in control not only of himself but of the physical environment and all of the gods, spirits, and powers honored and feared by the people of the Buddha's time."[116] During the course of the narrative, the relation of the Buddha to such things as former lives, suffering, disease, old age, death, food, ascetic practices, human desires, monastic community, the Dharma, gods, spirits, powers, etc., are expressed. The narrative presents the Buddha as the focal expression of the sacred. The various things that the Buddha is brought into relation with through the course of the narrative are fundamental features of the religious world. The way the Buddha relates to all of the above presents prototypes through which Buddhist devotees identify the matrix of relations that they also are set within and ways to come to terms with those relations. The power of the Buddha to address the issues raised by these networks of relations encourages people to follow the way of the Buddha in coming to terms with these relations.[117]

Paden (1994:71-72) cites Eliade's (1963:14) example of the totemic myths of Australian aborigines. These myths narrate a "Dream Time" that portrays the activities of mythical ancestors who journeyed on the earth for a while, stopping here and there to produce certain animals and plants, or to change the landscape. These ancestors and their activities are the focal expression of the sacred. Through their deeds the reality of the aborigine's world or some fragment of it came into existence (Eliade 1963:5). The

journeying, the animals, and the plants are all essential features of the aborigine's world and their relation to the mythical ancestors and the ancestors' activities in relation to them provide a matrix for ordering life. Eliade (1963:14) states that these myths provide the people with prototypes that they use to periodically repeat the acts and realize afresh the sacred power of the sacred ancestors, thereby insuring that these needed animals and plants continue to multiply. The myths are exemplary for the continuance and recreation of their religious world.

Paden (1994:77-78) holds that biblical narratives also are mythic language that structure religious worlds for those who deem the Bible to be their sacred writings. For example, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt tells of the suffering of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt, of human structures in opposition to God that create and maintain that suffering, and of the concern and ability of God to intervene and deliver the Israelites from that suffering. It tells of the power of God over the universe, superceding Egyptian magicians and the power of Pharaoh, bringing plagues upon Egypt, killing the firstborn of Egypt while sparing the firstborn of the Israelites, dividing the sea for safe passage of the Israelites and closing it again upon the Egyptians, providing food and water for the Israelites in the desert, etc. It tells of God's election of the Israelites to be a people in special covenant relation to God, of the demands that relationship has for behavior in relation to God, each other, the land, and the world. The activity and words of God are the focal expression of the sacred and the relations that the Israelites and all things have to God and each other in the narrative present paradigms through which devotees of the God of Israel identify networks of relations that they also are set within and with which they must come to terms. The narrative presents devotees with prototypes for relating to

God, people, and creation that can take up contemporary expression in community ritual and community language and behavior.

Each of the above three mythic narratives does more than present the origin of features of a religious world and prototypes for living in its relationships. Paden (1994:75,78-79, 87-89) holds that mythic language is a kind of agency that "summons up and embodies the very presence of that to which it refers.[118] Some indications of this are the use of myth in ritual as a context for healing, life transitions, and world renewal and maintenance.[119] Paden (1994:74) states that this embodying of the presence of the sacred and relations with the sacred elicits response to and participation in what the myth portrays. It presents a world that can be inhabited.[120] Those who respond to and participate in what mythic language summons up and embodies experience life differently than those who do not. For people who so respond and participate, myth has the power to create and recreate what it presents. Buddhist devotees can follow the path of the Buddha and experience the sacred power of his address to the issues raised by the mythic narrative. Australian aborigines can periodically renew their world by ritually re-enacting the activities of the sacred ancestors. Devotees of the biblical God (be they Christians or Jews) can respond to and experience God's gracious election of them to be his people, living in covenant relation to God, and participating in God's mission to the world.

The content of the above three narratives is very different and structures very different religious worlds. In fact, the same mythic language can even lead to diverse religious worlds that find different ways to participate in what the language presents.[121] Yet all three narratives are alike in presenting what is sacred and the origin of primary

features that ground the religious worlds that embrace them.[122] They present networks of relations that those primary features have to the sacred and prototypes for living in the matrix of those relations. They present what is enduring reality, the sacred values and purposes that are grounded in that reality, and the relations within that reality with which people need to come to terms. Paden holds that comparative perspective such as this can help us look for where myth locates the sacred, what features of the religious world it is founding, and what it presents to be primary relations with which people must come to terms. It can help us to understand something of what particular religious expressions mean to adherents by seeing how those expressions participate in the matrix of relations with the sacred that mythic language founds, maintains, and re-creates. The use of the structure as a lens for comparing religious worlds helps perception of what is analogous and what is different in the ways people of different religious worlds understand the sacred, the relations of their world to the sacred, and the sacred purposes and values that govern living in such a world.

Ritual Times

Paden (1994:95) defines ritual as "the deliberate structuring of action and time to give focus, expression, and sacredness to what would otherwise be diffuse, unexpressed, or profane. Ritual is sacred action and time deliberately created." He (1994:93) states, "As myth expresses world foundations in terms of word and image, ritual dramatizes world foundations in terms of performance."[123] This suggests that like myth, ritual provides a means for people to identify and make intelligible the sacred powers and relationships that are fundamental to their religious world. However, it does so in a way that gives expression to the sacred powers and relationships in the world of sense

experience. Sacred ritual makes explicit what is implicit in people's relationships with the sacred, providing a concrete frame of space and time that people can enter bodily and engage in a network of relations centered on the sacred.

Paden (1994:95) understands that ritual is essential to the existence of a religious world.[124] He states, "Religious life exists not only through myth but concurrently by a system of observances, some calendrical, some not." The ubiquitous presence of ritual activity within the life of religious communities supports such a stance. Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:283-4) observe that rituals play a vital role in building human communities and sustaining their understanding of the world. They provide focused and multi-layered forms of communication concerning relationships that are perceived to be deeply significant.[125]

Paden identifies two basic features of ritual. The first feature is the power of ritual to *focus* the attention of people on specific relations or networks of relations centered on the sacred. Paden (1994:96) states,

> The mind can be inattentive, diluted, spread out; but it can also attach itself to special projects with unalloyed attention and acuteness of focus. In ritual, what is out of focus is brought into focus. What is implicit is made explicit. All ritual behavior gains its basic effectiveness by virtue of such undivided, intensified concentration and by bracketing off distraction and interference.

Paden notes how in a Japanese tea ceremony, every detail of the preparation, sharing and drinking of the tea is performed with restraint and deliberateness, encouraging the participants to consciously experience and enact the values and understanding of life in relation to the sacred that they perceive these details to express. The deliberateness of the ceremony brackets off distraction and intensifies concentration on experiencing the Zen Buddhist view of the immanence of the absolute in the ordinary.[126]

The ability of rituals to focus attention is often enhanced by rituals being performed in time and/or space that is set aside for the ritual activity.[127] To enter the ritual, people often must pass over or through designated thresholds that enable them to leave behind profane space and time and focus on relations centered on the sacred.[128] The sacred space and time becomes an arena within which people may temporarily live and whose networks of relations with the sacred they may experience. When they exit the sacred space and time they will once again enter into the normal relations of everyday life, but they will carry with them the experiences and perspectives they received through the ritual.[129]

The second basic feature of ritual is that "it demonstrates its point directly in the world of the senses. It is tactile, visible, audible, somatic. Above all, it is embodied." It "weaves together acts and symbolic objects" (Paden 1994:98). Paden notes that people may kneel, prostrate, share food, fast, stand, parade, wash, dance, give gifts, decorate, dramatize, inflict pain, fight, cook, chant, be silent, put on special clothes, undress, etc. as a part of a ritual.[130] Particular actions may embody such things as "submission, sharing, obedience, celebration, purification, ecstasy," etc. (Paden 1994:98). Participation in a physical demonstration of the meaning of life in relation to the sacred has tremendous power to give people a sense that the sacred and the relations they have enacted in the ritual are real (Paden 1994:100). Geertz (1966:28) observes that religious conviction primarily arises out of the context of concrete acts of religious observance.[131]

Paden (1994:100) states there are two major kinds of ritual time that contribute to the structuring of religious worlds. One kind provides periodic renewal of the religious world.[132] Paden (1994:101) notes that in everyday preoccupations, what is most real,

valued, and sacred in a religious world may become neglected, forgotten, or diffused. Periodic rituals provide a way for communities to reconnect with the sacred, the way the sacred orders the world, and sacred values and purposes that govern living in the religious world. Paden indicates periodic rituals have some common patterns. They may reconnect people with the sacred by reliving myth, performing the great acts that founded their religious world or some aspect of it.[133] They may reconnect by engaging in purification exercises that purges the old and recasts things new.[134] They may ritually reconstitute social ties, roles, and values by engaging in symbolic practices that gives participants an experience of them.[135] They may ritually enter into a time of license where they reverse the sacred order of things, permitting some unleashing of chaos as a means to reinforcing or renewing life within the sacred order once the ritual time is completed.[136] The periodicity of these kinds of ritual can be daily, weekly, monthly, annually, or in some other periodic cycle.

A second kind of ritual time provides a way to integrate life transitions and crises into the mythic order (Paden 1994:112-118).[137] These transitions include such things as birth, adulthood, marriage, and death. They can also include such things as ordination, joining a religious community, or other significant changes in social status. Rituals that provide people passage through these change points use their power of focus and embodiment to (1) dismantle their old status, (2) transition them to a new status through instruction, testing, symbolic experience, etc., and (3) incorporate them into and publicly recognize their new status. Paden (1994:114) notes that the content of these rites display significant features of the mythic order of the religious world. The gods or symbols that a child is introduced to in rituals following birth indicates what a religious world thinks is

important to human identity.[138] The instruction, testing, and symbolic experience providing transition to a new status in adult rites indicates relations to sacred reality with which the new adult identity is joined.[139]

Both of the above kinds of ritual time not only display primary features of a religious world, they bring features of it into existence (Paden 1994:100). Periodic rituals renew, strengthen, or recreate in the religious world the relations with the sacred upon which they focus. Rituals of transitions actually effect the transitions, placing those passing through them into the roles, relations, identity, and changed situations with which they are concerned. Paden holds that comparative perspective on common patterns of world structuring and renewal performed by rituals can help us look for where a ritual locates the sacred and what values and understandings of life in relation to the sacred it enacts. It can help us look for how participants interpret features of their myths to relate to life transitions and world renewal. It can help us see what is alike and different in the ways people of different religious worlds understand the sacred, the relations of features of their world to the sacred, and the sacred purposes and values that govern living in such a world.

Gods

Paden (1994:9, 121-125) uses the term "gods" with wider parameters than is commonly associated with the term. He defines "gods" as "any superior being that humans religiously engage." They may be perceived as having character and personality or as representing some force. They are the points at which people encounter and engage a sacred "other" with which they must interrelate in order to successfully inhabit their religious world. The definition could include such wide-ranging possibilities as the

monotheistic God, the supernatural beings found in various mythologies, angels, demons, ancestors, gurus, buddhas, bodhisattvas, kings, heroes, etc. The significant issue from Paden's perspective is that a god exists as part of a bilateral relationship. Within a religious world, someone or something is a god only as people perceive it to be a sacred "other" that addresses them or that they can address. When Paden uses "gods" to refer to a structure of religious world construction, his reference is to social interactions that people participate in with such sacred others. Paden (1994:124) states, "A god is a category of social interactive behavior, experienced in a way that is analogous to the experience of other selves."

Engagements with gods structure religious worlds by locating where people may encounter and interact with the sacred power of a god and by establishing patterns in the ways that people interact with and experience a god. Paden (1994:125-132) notes that people generally connect gods with domains of sacred power that they perceive to both exist and to be critically important within their religious world. He states, "If a world is crucially subject to what comes from the sky, from animal or plant life, from clan or political order, or from ritual purity, we may expect to find gods located in these junctures and conceived in these categories." For example, in traditional Asian cultures, people perceive ancestors as able to in some measure protect or disrupt family prosperity and interact with them with this in view. [140] In some religious worlds there may be gods that have power to bring or to heal sickness, to grow or inhibit the growth of agricultural crops and livestock, and to enable or prevent conception of children. The power domain may be quite specific as in the above examples or over the entire world as in the universal monotheistic God. The domain may be connected with a geographical locality such as a

mountain or temple, with the presence of a particular person such as a guru, with the inner self such as the presence of Christ within a person's heart, or with that which is beyond mental objectification such as the nirvana of Buddhism. Connected with these domains are points of focus where people may address or be addressed by a god. These points of focus include such things as an incarnation, the words of a holy book, priests, symbolic objects, etc.

Eliade's (1959:21-22,36-42) work suggests that the points of focus often conform to archetypal hierophanies presented in a people's myths.[141] For example, I have observed participants in charismatic Christian communities in Korea experience what they interpret to be a "filling of the Holy Spirit." Following examples that they perceive to exist in Acts, such fillings are generally expected to occur during the temporal location of corporate prayer and worship (Acts 2:1-4; 4:23-31) or at times when leaders lay hands on people while praying for it to occur (Acts 8:14-17).

Paden (1994:132-140) divides the relational patterns by which people experience gods into two basic categories. The primary category is the experience of encountering or receiving a god. Rudolf Otto named the experience of such encounters as the sense of the numinous. The sense of the numinous includes both the "wholly otherness" and the awe, majesty, and unusual energy of the sacred that is encountered in the experience (Capps 1995:22-23). Paden (1994:132) states that it is the experience "of being faced by a reality or being that is astonishingly greater than one's self." When people socially interact with this reality or being as an "other," the structure of "gods" is present and given content. People of various religious communities have encountered the sense of the numinous through such diverse means as visions, spirit possession, mystical experience, reading or

hearing sacred words, prayer, meditation, entering sacred space, sensory contact with holy objects or people, and the experience of traumatic or uncommon events (Paden 1994:133-135). In connection with such encounters people may receive what they regard as enlightenment, empowerment to endure or overcome difficulties, and/or moral transformation. They may also experience fear, suffering or destruction. Paden (1994:135) states that people have often dedicated themselves to a religious life when they feel that through an extraordinary event a god has touched them.[142]

Just as people in a religious world generally experience gods in particular patterns, they also respond to gods in certain patterns. Paden (1994:136) observes that some of these patterns constitute the characteristics of long-term relationship to a god within the religious world. Such patterns may be identified as service, obedience, commitment, faith and trust, but what constitutes the content of the pattern will vary with the nature of the god and conform to the nature of the god. For example, the frequent repetition of the confession that "there is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet" in Islam characterizes a relationship with a deity that is perceived to be transcendent, all-powerful, and as calling for submission to him. Christians who perceive God as forgiving their sins, restoring communal relationship with them, and as requiring them to do the same with other people will serve God by acknowledging the forgiveness they have received from God and by seeking to forgive others and to restore communal relationships with them. Paden (1994:137) states,

> Where fanatic devotees of Kali the Devourer took it as their divine responsibility to murder on her behalf, adherents of the peaceful Tao aspire to be like the Tao. Where gods are departmental bureaucrats, the employees behave accordingly. What the gods *are* determines what it is that belongs to them, and what it is that humans have received and hence should give back.

Other patterns of response to a god are specifically related to an occasion or need. Paden (1994:137-140) identifies petition, atonement, offering, celebration and divination to be common patterns in many religious worlds. Petition is concerned with people seeking to receive from a god something that they cannot obtain on their own.[143] Atonement involves words and activities that seek to remove offenses to a god, thereby avoiding judgment from the god and making it possible to receive benefits from the god.[144] Through offerings people give something of their own to a god in response to gifts they have received from the god (often with a view to receiving more from the god).[145] Celebration refers to expressions of thanksgiving, worship, and praise that people give to a god in response to benefits they have received from the god. Divination is concerned with reading objects in the physical world in order to determine the choice and timing of human activities so that they will correlate with the activity or inclination of a god.[146] The ways these occasional activities take expression may vary greatly in different religious worlds. Like the patterns of long-term relationship with a god, their content is shaped by the nature of the god and what is perceived to belong to the god.

Gods as a structure of religious world construction provides another lens for locating the sacred and perceiving the nature of the sacred in a religious world. They make clear focal points of interaction with the sacred and how those interactions, create, maintain, and renew aspects of the religious world. Since people interact and experience a god in accordance with the god's nature, observing and listening to their accounts of the interaction and experience can help us see what they understand gods and their sacred power to be. It can help us understand what values, needs, and goals various engagements with gods create, support, and answer. Common cross-cultural patterns of interacting

with gods can give us perspective on what is alike and different in the ways people of different religious worlds understand gods, the relations of features of their world to the gods, and the sacred purposes and values of the gods that govern living in such a world.

Systems of Purity

Paden (1994:9-10,142-143) maintains that all religious worlds have systems of purity and impurity. He (1994:142) defines purity as freedom "from mixture or contact with that which weakens, impairs, or pollutes; containing no foreign or vitiating material." When applied to religious worlds, purity is concerned with the relation that specific behaviors and dispositions have to the integrity, differentiation, consistency, and unity of the religious world. Systems of purity are concerned with what fosters sacred order and what diminishes it.[147] They are concerned with disciplines that divide the world into "zones of order and disorder, positive and negative choices, realms of integrity and pollution" (Paden 1994:164).

Paden (1994:143) holds that "purity only exists in tension with its opposite." This corresponds to a polarity between the sacred and profane that is commonly asserted by many scholars who study religion.[148] The pure is the absence of the impure and the impure is the absence of the pure. Observance of what people place in opposition as pure and impure indicates where the boundaries of sacred order in their religious world lie and what the sacred order values. For example, when people labor to dispel ignorance, it points to the high value they place on receiving enlightenment. Monastic efforts to protect members of their community against concupiscence indicate the high value they place upon chastity as their gift to God. Severe responses to disloyalty and apostasy

suggest the high value those engaging in those responses place on their community remaining loyal to sacred authority.

Paden (1994:145) observes that purity systems can be quite detailed in their distinctions between pure and impure behavior and dispositions, answering to the complexity of human life. He (1994:145) states,

> Every distinction—no matter how minute—addresses some real situation the adherent may confront or some symbolic unity to existence that the adherent desires. To the participant, purity rules represent consistency [with the sacred] precisely *in* the midst of the specific circumstances and challenges that arise in everyday life.

What might appear to be an overly minute purity distinction may have a broader significance to an adherent than advocating or warning against the specific behavior or disposition it identifies. They become a means for an adherent to express a deliberate, disciplined attitude to bring the totality of life into consistency with the sacred.[149] They can provide a means to symbolically express consonance and avoid dissonance with the sacred in every domain of existence.[150]

Diverse systems of purity can understand the same root mythology to establish different oppositions between the sacred and the profane and different ways for living in tune with the sacred. Paden (1994:146-152) notes the extended debates that have occurred in major religious traditions over what constitutes true piety and the schisms that have occurred in response to such issues. For example, Christian communities have followed diverse paths of holiness, some focusing on regular participation in sacraments dispensed by proper authorities, others on self-renunciation that sought to abandon worldly attachments through monastic living, others on self-introspection that sought to expose all self-justification, others on self-abandonment through mystical contemplation,

and still others through self-sacrificial devotion to the needs of people. Similar diversity can be found within Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, etc. The systems of purity that people practice provide a means for understanding what they perceive to be consistent with and opposed to the sacred.

Built into all systems of purity are ways for people to deal with impurity. Paden (1994:152-158) presents three typical patterns that occur cross-culturally. The first pattern is avoidance of what is profane. Avoidance can take on forms such as prohibition of, detachment from, and abstention from what is profane.[151] The second pattern is purifying what has already contaminated the sacred order. Acts of purification may take such forms as inflicting something upon those who have profaned the sacred order, sacrificing something of value (a possession, one's self, one's life) as preparation to receive grace from the sacred, a god sending suffering as a means to purge the profane, etc.[152] The third pattern is to transcend the purity/profanity opposition. This may take such forms as entering into a sacred reality that transcends purity/profanity distinctions, or engaging what is impure and transforming it.[153] What people deal with as impure and the ways they deal with it indicate the nature and power of the sacred order, what is valued for or is essential to that order, and the way it structures the religious world.

Paden (1994:159) states that systems of purity are "a function of the unity and integrity of the [religious] world." They can help us understand the ways that people living in a religious world understand their world to be divided, what constitutes holiness in the world, what goal(s) the sacred establishes for human life, what the sacred requires for people to reach the goal(s), what opposes the sacred, and how profanity is dealt with or transformed. Common cross-cultural patterns in systems of purity can give us

perspective on what is alike and different in the ways people of different religious worlds understand the nature and power of the sacred, what is valued for living in relation to the sacred, and what is required to respond to or transform the profane.

Address to Hermeneutical Issues

The above has focused upon the ways each of the four structures contributes to religious world construction and definition. In any given religious world, these structures are fully integrated with each other. Paden (1994:163-164) states,

> Myth, with its images of origins and endings, and with its grounding paradigms and stories, presents the very foundation of an inhabited universe. Gods crystallize how we address and are addressed by those agencies on which our world depends. Ritual, with its times for all seasons, monitors all that is of enduring worth and all that changes in life, linking the human microcosm with the abiding symbols and order of the larger cosmos. Religious disciplines create paths in the midst of chaos, separating the undifferentiated world into zones of order and disorder, positive and negative choices, realms of integrity and pollution. So these patterns of comparative study are not Platonic archetypes that exist in an independent, timeless realm, but are rather the active, channeling, typical ways that religions create worlds. World is what they are about, what they pattern.

The four structures provide a set of lenses that help us to increasingly perceive and understand the nature and scope of a religious world and how it is like and how it is distinct from the nature and scope of other religious worlds. They help us see webs of relations within which religious expressions are embedded and something of what they mean to those who employ them. They help us perceive where the sacred is located within the religious world, what nature and power people attribute to the sacred, what people are saying and doing in relation to the sacred, what values and goals the sacred supports and pursues, and what significance people's patterns of relating to the sacred have for common human concerns.

Paden does not bring up for discussion how his structures of religious world construction might be used for biblical interpretation or how they might address the issues of biblical hermeneutics discussed above. However, his four structures of religious world construction suggest avenues for perceiving the religious worlds presented by biblical texts and engaging them with our own worlds. Biblical texts do present and/or assume sacred narratives and images (myth), present prototypes for and encourage a number of ritual activities, present examples of and calls for engagements with God, and present examples of and instructions related to issues of purity/impurity. Paden's structures provide us with categories and questions for examining and reflecting upon what biblical texts point to as fundamental language and behavior options for structuring a Christian religious world. Those same categories and questions can also provide a means for comparing and contrasting our current religious world with what the biblical texts present. Figure 5 presents an overview of some of the major questions that each of the structures might helps us to explore.[154]

Myth:

1. What mythic language (narratives, symbols) is expressed and/or assumed?
2. Where does the mythic language locate the sacred?
3. What does the mythic language present as focal expressions of the sacred?
4. What features of the world does the mythic language present and/or found?
5. What relations do those features have to the focal expressions of the sacred?
6. What sacred values and purposes does the mythic language present?
7. What does the mythic language present as prototypes for inhabiting the religious world?

Ritual:

1. What ritual structuring of space and time is expressed, expected, or encouraged?
2. Where does the ritual locate the sacred?
3. What values, purposes, and power of the sacred does the ritual enact?
4. If the ritual is concerned with periodic renewal/maintenance, what does it renew and what is understood to effect renewal?
5. If the ritual is concerned with life transitions, what is transformed and into what features of mythic order is it integrated?

Gods:

1. What engagements with a god is expressed, expected, or encouraged?
2. Where does the engagement with a god locate the sacred?
3. How does a god address people and how do people address a god, and what does this indicate about the nature of the god and what belongs to the god?
4. What power of the sacred is encountered through engagement with a god?
5. What values, needs, and goals does the engagement with a god create, support, or answer?

Systems of Purity:

1. What systems of purity are expressed and/or assumed?
2. Where do the systems of purity locate the sacred and the boundaries between sacred and profane?
3. What do the systems of purity indicate to be the nature and power of the sacred?
4. What do the systems of purity indicate the sacred order values and is essential to that order?
5. What goal(s) do the systems of purity indicate the sacred establishes and what is/are required to reach it/them?
6. What do the systems of purity indicate is in opposition to the sacred and how is profanity dealt with or transformed?

Figure 5: Questions for Exploring Religious Worlds

Comparative study through Paden's structures addresses issues of aims and interests by directing us to pursue the goal of understanding the religious interests of a biblical text. How are the religious expressions in a biblical text participating in a religious world and what are they contributing to the defining of that world?[155] Paden would hold that the aim of this kind of understanding is appropriate to both the subject matter and the interests of biblical texts. Mythic language, rituals, engagements with God, and purity systems are the primary content of biblical texts. The religious expressions within these structures are about religious world creation, maintenance, and renewal. Expressing the sacred and living in relation to the sacred is central to their interests. Paden's comparative approach provides a way to listen to the aims and interests of biblical texts.

Paden's comparative approach addresses the problem of self-serving interpretations by directing us to let the relations within which the content of a biblical text is embedded via the four structures to stimulate and constrain what we perceive and understand. The use of the four structures does not predetermine where the sacred is located, what is the content of the sacred, what values and goals the sacred supports and pursues, or what religious expressions are required to inhabit a religious world. The goal of the method is to increasingly perceive and understand what specific religious expressions communicate about these things.[156] The aim of understanding also directs us to keep our understanding provisional and open to challenge.

Paden's comparative method addresses issues of the distance between horizons by providing a way to discern the patterns and shape that particular religious expressions in a biblical text are giving to their religious world. Perceiving patterns in the ways that

expressions in biblical texts locate the sacred, relate to the sacred, express the values and goals of the sacred, etc., provides a framework that can stimulate and constrain the ways we fill in gaps and indeterminacies presented by a text. Such patterns can also stimulate and constrain us to perceive what is or could be analogous patterns in our own religious world. It provides a means for perceiving ways that different contemporary content can participate in similar ways of locating the sacred, relating to the sacred, and expressing the values and goals of the sacred. It can also provide a means for perceiving just where and in what ways patterns in our contemporary religious worlds are analogous and different from those presented by biblical texts.

Paden's four structures indicate significant features of how we might engage biblical texts as addressees of those texts who are seeking to be shaped by them. The structures of myth, ritual, gods, and systems of purity have repeatedly shown a capacity for their contents to speak to and beyond the situations within which they were formed. They have shown a capacity to maintain certain patterns of language and behavior in relation to the sacred while also having elasticity to address and integrate new situations and needs. Through this capacity the four structures provide channels for the religious expressions of biblical texts to be engaged and become creatively active in our own religious worlds.

For example, we can imaginatively enter into the narratives expressed or assumed by biblical texts, responding to and participating in them as myths that embody features of the sacred that can create, maintain, or renew our religious worlds. We can engage biblical texts within a ritual framework, experiencing the focusing and displaying power of ritual to connect our lives with the sacred reality presented by the texts. We can

socially interact with God as we study biblical texts, engaging with God in ways stimulated by the texts. We can seek boundaries for inward dispositions and behaviors in our religious worlds that are analogically consonant with those present in the texts. Paden's understanding of religious worlds suggests that when communities embrace fundamental changes in the content of their myths, rituals, gods, and systems of purity, the religious worlds within which they live become fundamentally changed. Engaging biblical texts through the channels of the four structures provides a way for those texts to address us and shape the content of the myths, rituals, gods, and systems of purity that are actively shaping our religious world.

Paden's four structures also provide perspective on engaging biblical texts in cooperation with their language modes. The invitation of biblical narratives to imaginatively enter into them and experience their plot, configurations, encounters, and possibilities, is the invitation of myth to experience the creative and transforming power of the sacred. The invitation of biblical instructions to bring our identity and lifestyle under their scrutiny is the invitation of systems of purity to direct us towards what constitutes sacred values and purposes, and what fosters sacred order and what diminishes it. The call of biblical prophecy to hear a word of the LORD is the call to engage with God, to experience his presence and power, to hear his warnings and promises in relation to particular human situations, and to respond with repentance and hope. The invitation of biblical experiential and revelatory material to enter into and reflect upon the experiences they portray is the invitation to engage with God in ways guided by that material. Much of this material is also an invitation to ritually perform

what it portrays, experiencing ritual's power to facilitate our experience of God through its ability to focus and display.

Conclusion

In chapter two we have seen how missiological discussion has brought forward four factors that significantly affect the meaning people perceive and receive through their Bible study. These factors are the social location of the readers, the environment of communal activity and interaction, the historical and cultural particularity of biblical texts, and interactive or circular processes that go back and forth between contemporary life situations and Bible study. In various ways they have been advocated as necessary ingredients for a Bible study strategy that facilitates transformation of religious worlds.

Discussions in biblical hermeneutics have raised a number of issues regarding perception and reception of meaning that are related to these factors. It has drawn attention to the possibility of vested interests shaping our perception and reception of meaning so that it is self-serving, indicating the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion that unmasks idols we may be (perhaps unconsciously) serving. It also asserts the importance of keeping our perception of meaning as provisional and open to challenge, since every interpretation of a biblical text privileges some aspects of the text over others. It further affirms the need to listen for the communicative intent and interests of biblical texts so that we may hear their address to us as an "other" and thereby have our horizons expanded.

The discussion has drawn attention to how the distance between the horizons of biblical texts and our horizons creates a need for us to fill in gaps and indeterminacies that are presented by biblical texts. The need to do this raises the further issue of what

textual, extra-textual, and experiential cues help us find and choose adequate frameworks for engaging with the biblical texts. Some have brought attention to the role of dialoging with biblical texts and the activity of God's Spirit as a means for extending and transforming our horizons in ways that help them more adequately fuse with the horizons of the texts.

The discussion has drawn attention to the effect on perception and reception of meaning that arises from a theological reading of biblical texts as addressees rather than as neutral observers. The inclusion of the writings in a Christian canon implies their capacity to authoritatively address all Christian communities and the need to read them in accord with communal traditions and communal ways for empowering and correcting our interpretation and practices. The concern for modes of engagement also draws attention to the language modes employed by biblical texts and the effect that cooperation with those language modes can have on what we experience when we engage the texts and how we respond to that engagement.

Such issues need to be addressed by a Bible study strategy that seeks for the gospel to shape religious worlds. The discussion above has shown that Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction all provide significant ways to respond to these issues. Dodd's model directs us to attend in our Bible study strategy to salient features of an overall intercultural communication process that facilitate an effective address to the issues. It draws attention to the role that perceiving biblical texts to be culturally different plays in motivating us to engage in adaptive behavior that seeks for effective communication. It highlights socially constructing a third culture environment for our

Bible study that is conducive to the pursuit of the desired outcomes. It directs strategies employed in that environment to pursue the goals of task (adequate responses to God through our engagement with the text), relationship (love for God and others), and cultural adjustment (feeling comfortable in engaging with the biblical texts).

Green's approach to discourse analysis directs us to engage with biblical texts by making primary the question of what communicative aims and functions a biblical text is seeking to achieve with us. In order to pursue that question, he directs us to analyze the social and linguistic webs within which co-text, discourse situation, and presupposition pools have set biblical texts. He also directs us to become conscious of the social and linguistic webs within which we are placing the texts. This kind of analysis provides a way for signals in a biblical text to stimulate and constrain what meanings we perceive the text to be communicating, what social relations it is defining, what ends it is pursuing, and what types of responses we perceive it to be calling from us. Such perception guides the way we fill in gaps and indeterminacies in the text, and our listening to the address of the text. It can make us conscious of our own aims and interests and the relation they have to those of the text. The analysis stimulates relational patterns to come into view that intuitive and analogical modes of understanding may connect and interweave with patterns in our contemporary religious worlds.

Paden's structures of religious world construction direct us to seek to understand the religious aims and interests of biblical texts by examining how their content expresses and relates to what they deem to be sacred. Biblical texts are concerned to provide language and behavioral options for a religious world through their expression of myth, ritual, gods, and/or systems of purity. They are concerned to express and renew sacred

power, goals, and values through their participation in these structures. Discerning the patterns and shape that particular religious expressions in a biblical text are giving to their religious world provides a context for filling in gaps and indeterminacies in the text. They also provide a means to perceive analogous ways those patterns are shaping or could shape our religious world. The structuring power of Paden's four structures suggests that the religious expressions of biblical texts become creatively active in our own religious worlds as we engage the address of the biblical texts through participation in the structures.

Dodd, Green, and Paden all present significant possibilities for a Bible study strategy that effectively addresses hermeneutical issues of perception and reception of meaning. They present directions for shaping a Bible study strategy that can facilitate the transformation of religious worlds. The next chapter will show a way they can integrate with and offer a means to empower the transformational agenda and mission goal of Hiebert's model of critical contextualization.

NOTES

[1] I am using "receive" in the sense of embracing the meaning perceived as a transforming influence that becomes part of the language and behavioral options that shape our religious worlds.

[2] Dyrness (1985:162) warns that by "ignoring the particular settings in which Scripture is read we risk losing the richness that varying perspectives may bring to our understanding of the truth of Scripture."

[3] Morris does not specifically state his aim. But in his discussion of history and theology (1971:44) he raises the issue of "whether John is telling us what he thinks about God, or whether he is telling us what God has done." Morris positions himself with the latter. He goes on to say that "what is required here is evidence. And the evidence is that where he can be tested John is remarkably accurate." Throughout his commentary, Morris brings forth such evidence. In his discussion of background (1971:60) he states that "we must know the kind of milieu in which author moved if we are to be sure we understand his meaning." Throughout his commentary he presents what he thinks is relevant grammatical, literary, and historical background for interpreting the meaning of sayings and events recorded in the Gospel.

[4] In a footnote (1971:254 note 13) Morris does suggest his use of an evangelism narrative when he quotes with approval Ephrem the Syrian's summary of the event: "Jesus came to the fountain as a hunter... He threw a grain before one pigeon that He might catch the whole flock...At the beginning of the conversation He did not make Himself known to her...but first she caught sight of a thirsty man, then a Jew, then a Rabbi, afterwards a prophet, last of all the Messiah. She tried to get the better of the thirsty man, she showed her dislike of the Jew, she heckled the Rabbi, she was swept off her feet by the prophet, and she adored the Christ."

[5]Vanhoozer (1995:302-303) observes how philosophical currents such as Kant's contention that the mind is a participant in the construction of knowledge, Thomas Kuhn's argument that all observation is theory-laden, and the antirealism of Nietzsche and others has prepared the way for the current awareness of the ways ideology can shape interpretation.

[6] Some of this may be quite unconscious. Schneiders (1995:351, 367) suspects an interpretation such as the one presented by Morris as being in part formed by an androcentric sexist ideology that "denigrates women and erases their apostolic identity and role in the early Christian community. I doubt if

Morris had any consciousness that he might be doing such a thing. However, comparing conflicting interpretations offers the possibility for Morris and us to become more self-aware and to re-examine what interests are present and employed in the meaning we perceive.

[7]Hordern (1983:6) quotes the following from Rudolph Bultmann (1960:293): "The formulation of a question,...arises from an interest which is based in the life of the inquirer, and it is the presupposition of all interpretations seeking an understanding of the text, that this interest, too, is in some way or other alive in the text which is to be interpreted, and forms the link between the text and its expositor." Hordern (1983:77) goes on to say, "While asking a question is an important way to read the Bible, we need to ask what questions are appropriate to address to the Bible. We cannot expect it to answer every possible question, and likely there are certain kinds of questions that cannot be asked without violating the inherent linguistic integrity of the Bible. And then arises the comment from Barth and Bonhoeffer that perhaps we ought not to take questions to the Bible at all, rather we should let the Bible question us and our questions."

[8] Fee states that looking for the interests of the Spirit of God is not something to be added in at the end of our exegesis, but belongs necessarily to the historical task of listening for the interests of the text.

[9] Green (2002a:9) asks the question, "Can a text that articulates the importance of care for the alien, the orphan, and widow be effectively engaged by persons who adopt a neutral position with regard to society's marginal?"

[10] Ben F. Meyer (1989:69) observes that a horizon is "the limit of what can be seen from any given vantage point." The figure assumes that where we are located culturally, linguistically, temporally, and theologically will affect what we can notice, what appears to be prominent and peripheral, and the way various things relate to each other. When we have little or no experience with what persons can "see" from a particular location, their description of and activity within what they perceive from that location can seem unintelligible. However, to extend the metaphor, in the process of life people do shift their locations, making it possible to shift or expand their horizons.

[11] Green (2000:31) cites Wolfgang Iser's observation that narrative texts inevitably provide only a selection of details, even in regard to the plot. It is left to readers to actualize the text's clues by filling in gaps to produce meaning. Commenting on reader-response theory, Stiver (2001:117) states, "a text does not say everything. If a text did, it would be too long and boring. An artful text says enough to help the reader

be an accomplice in the production of its meaning. In this way, the reader's imagination is unavoidably engaged. Each reader thus renders his or her own distinctive fusion of horizons that shares much in common with others but in other ways is distinctively unique."

[12] Goldingay (1995:38-39) states that one of the ways in which biblical stories do things to an audience is by leaving questions and ambiguities for their audience to answer or to resolve." Powell (1995:245) provides an example of this by stating that narratives like Luke 15:25-32 present conflicts that are not resolved, leaving readers to decide what they would do if they were the elder son. Powell further states that symbols such as the transformation of valleys, mountains, crooked places, and rough ways in Luke 3:4-6 provoke the reader to consider what needs to be transformed in their own world (1995:249).

[13]Wall (1995:384) affirms the relation of biblical texts to the commonalities of human experience when he says that "the prospect of all canonical literature is that the spiritual crisis that occasioned a particular writing is roughly comparable to the spiritual crisis that faces its future readership." Thiselton (1992:542) observes how Wittgenstein held that the common behavior of humankind was a system of reference for interpreting an unknown language and how the necessary context for the operability of some language games lay in simply being a human. Hordern (1983:229-230) states, "History, as the social interacting of people, and not simply the passage of time, must be a context that unites human existence, rather than a context that divides it. History, in this sense, provides a bridge over the hermeneutical gap."

[14] Krister Stendahl (1962:422) states, "Our only concern is to find out what these words meant when uttered or written by the prophet, the priest, the evangelist, or the apostle – and regardless of their meaning in later stages of religious history, our own included." Green (2000:32-33) states that Stendahl's distinction between "What did it mean?" and "What does it mean?" became the broadly accepted criteria for distinguishing the task of biblical exegesis to be descriptive and the task of systematic theology to be determining from such description what is prescriptive for Christian life.

[15] Wink (1973:2) observes that "detached neutrality in matters of faith is not neutrality at all, but already a decision against responding. At the outset, questions of truth and meaning have been excluded, since they can only be answered participatively, in terms of a lived response."

[16] Along similar lines, William Willimon (1990:19) argues that the Bible "must be read from the awareness of its desire to form a new people." Mesters' (1992:44) contention that the Bible, the Christian

community, and the real-life situation of the people and the surrounding world must all be present and enter into the process of interpretation expresses a similar concern.

[17] Green (2000:30) states, "The interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel by Jesus and Paul, and the inclusion of those Scriptures in the Christian Bible, is profound testimony to our claim that the meaning of Scripture cannot be relegated or reduced to its historical moment."

[18] Goldingay (1995:127) states, "As the material developed, individual stories became part of a Story, social conventions became Torah, occasional oracles became part of prophetic scriptures, sayings became part of Wisdom, and prayers and praises became part of a Psalter. Understanding these sections of scripture requires that we take account of their being designed to be canonical writings."

[19] Seitz (1998:206-211) argues that the canonical form of Isaiah presents a single complex vision that inter-relates former things, new things, and latter things in such a way as to address both ongoing generations of Israel and those belonging to other nations. He (Seitz 1998:211) states that Isaiah is "not just 'someone else's mail' but a divine correspondence in which we who are among the nations learn that Israel's God means to be our God, so that together with Israel and all flesh we might come and offer him right worship, without which we cannot live, hope, or love as God would have us." Goldingay (1995:128) notes how periodic allusions to Judah in another prophetic writing, the book of Amos, "invite Judah to read God's words to northern Israel as also having significance for Judeans." The last oracle in Amos concerning restoration invites reading the earlier Amos oracles of judgment in the new context that judgment is not God's last word.

[20] John 4 illustrates this with the lack of detail about the Samaritan woman's situation, thereby stimulating the diverse ways of filling in gaps engaged in by Morris, Schneiders, and Bradshaw.

[21] Goldingay (1995:130) states that "it may not be surprising that intensive efforts to identify the historical context to which Romans is addressed have not proved as fruitful for the letter's interpretation as one might have expected; these studies work against the intention and nature of the work itself."

[22] Hart (2000:186) affirms that reading in accord with rules laid down by a tradition reflects "a basic conviction that issues of right and wrong, truth and falsehood are at stake in the task of reading itself."

[23] Hart (2000:192) states that reading by such rules is like undergoing an apprenticeship, learning from the successes and failures of prior masters of reading.

[24] Seitz (1998:12) argues that there is a complex intertextuality that binds all biblical texts together and that the context for biblical study is "the way the New has heard the Old -- its own MS-DOS -- and the way the Old, in the light of the New, renders God in Christ for those who were once without God in the world." In regard to the shaping of Christian life, Seitz (1998:26) states that "our understanding of the holiness of the son and the life he calls us to is derived by reference backward to what Israel knew of God in tent, temple, pillar of fire, and cloud."

[25] Robert W. Wall (1995:382ff.) argues that the church's placement of biblical writings into a canon expressed interests that biblical writings were to converse with each other and with the community of faith regarding the life of God's people.

[26] Watson (1994:6) notes how corporate recitation of a creed such as the Nicene creed asserts that holy scripture "constitutes a single narrative of creation, redemption and final salvation." It affirms "a trinitarian pattern in the scriptural narrative, which tells first of' 'the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth,' then of' 'the only Son of God' who 'became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made human,' and then of 'the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life' – a life which is presumably both present and future." It further involves the worshippers in confessing belief that the trinitarian scriptural narrative is true.

[27] Fowl (1995:409) states that "anyone concerned about the transformation, nurture, and sustenance of communities of Christians capable of interpreting and embodying Scripture faithfully must attend to the worship of such communities."

[28] Bailey (1995:211) complains that theologians and ethicists have often "attended to the content of texts, not their literary forms. In so doing, they have missed important clues for meaning."

[29] Stiver (2001:118) notes how Ricoeur contested the position that parables have one basic point and argued that parables were extended metaphors that were not fully translatable into literal language or theological points. They are a language mode that stimulates a clash of worlds that reorients our world's relation to God. Translation into other language modes loses this effect.

[30] Goldingay (1995:7) recognizes that "genres overlap in their inner nature." "An experiential text such as a prayer is implicitly an instruction text telling people how to pray. A narrative text is a fruit of reflection. What a narrative tells a story about, an instruction text expresses as an ethic, a prophecy turns into warning and promise, and experiential-revelatory material makes matter for reflection and prayer."

[31] Goldingay (1995:7) states that "method must correspond to text. It is in this sense that there may be a special 'sacred hermeneutics' just as there may be a special legal hermeneutics. Texts must be interpreted as what they are."

[32] Willimon (1990:73) states, "In listening to a story, we find ourselves deeply engaged in it. Our experiences relate to the experiences being depicted in the story. We find ourselves much more involved in listening to a story than we are when listening to simple propositions."

[33] Thiselton (1992:351) states that Ricoeur is concerned with the creative power of language. "Metaphor produces *new possibilities* of imagination and vision; narrative creates *new configurations* which structure individual or corporate experience." The new possibilities and configurations open up new understandings and when these possibilities and configurations are seen as genuine they can issue in decision to change or be changed.

[34] The focal encounter is the encounter with God. Goldingay (2000:137) states that "the primary concern of biblical narrative is to expound the gospel, to talk about God and what God has done, rather than to talk about the human characters who appear in God's story.

[35] Goldingay (1995:58) states that biblical narratives transform our imagination, encouraging and challenging us by revealing the ways of God with the people of God, showing us how God characteristically relates to people like us.

[36] Referring to the Old Testament, Coleson (1984:15) states that the instructions are concerned to shape the covenant community to behavior that reflects the character of God. They are presented in the context of the narrative of keeping covenant with God.

[37] Richard B. Hays (1996:295) states that "rules and principles must find their place within the story of God's redemption of the world through Jesus Christ." He (1996:339-340) goes on to argue that rules such as "if someone hits you, turn the other cheek; bless those who persecute you; never avenge

yourselves; if your enemy is hungry, feed him" express and find coherence within the peacemaking character of the people of God whose paradigm is Jesus' passion.

[38] Goldingay's (1995:92) comment that "providing speed bumps to slow the traffic in the street in front of the house" might be a faithful embodiment of what Deuteronomy 22:8 is getting at in regard to our response to God's purpose suggests something of what Hays is saying.

[39] Ellingsworth (1983:196-197) says, "An interpersonal encounter may be designated as intercultural when the participants act as though they believe it is intercultural." He (1983:198) states, "An interpersonal encounter is intercultural while the participants are undertaking adaptive behavior based on their estimates of the foreignness of the other."

[40] In an earlier work, Dodd and Lewis (1991:16) affirm that "human communication is the exchange of symbols between people." Both the "exchange of symbols" (content) and the "between people" (relationship) aspects of communication affect the meaning people assign to their communicative interaction.

[41] Ehrenhaus (1983:260-261) draws on theory and research (Heider 1958; Newtson 1973) that suggests people bring coherency to a stream of communication by organizing the structure and sequence of the communication into personally and socially meaningful units. From such units people attribute characteristics, such as social identity, motivation, background, etc. that can plausibly account for the communicative behavior of the other as people interact.

[42] Edward T. Hall (1981[1959]:ix-x) notes how an American aid mission in Greece was unable to negotiate an agreement because the Greeks inferred from the American's outspoken communication style and approach to meeting length and objectives that the Americans acted like peasants lacking finesse and were trying to pull the wool over their eyes by devious scheduling and tricks.

[43] Dodd (1998:24) sees first impressions to be significant because they lead to judgments about whether to continue interacting, inferences about a person's motivations, projection of additional personality qualities that are consistent with those inferred from the communication style, and summarizing a person as fitting or not fitting a stereotype.

[44] Interpersonal communications scholars Berger and Calabrese (1975) formulated the theory as a means of predicting and explaining communication in initial interactions between people. Drawing upon

Heider's (1958) work on attribution that contends people seek to organize what they perceive from their environment into meaningful events and actions, the theory assumes that when strangers meet they are concerned to increase predictability about how others and themselves will behave in the interaction (Berger and Calabrese 1975:100). Gudykunst and his associates modified the theory to include anxiety and extended it to intercultural conditions (Gudykunst and Hammer 1988; Gudykunst and Nishida 1989; and Gudykunst and Kim 1984). Gudykunst (1993) named his modification of the theory Anxiety-Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) and he and various associates have continued to extensively research theoretical statements in the theory, focusing on anxiety and uncertainty management as a means to effective intercultural communication outcomes. For an extensive presentation of the most recent version of the theory see Gudykunst (1995a). For use of the theory in studying intercultural communication and references to research supporting it along with critiques, see Gudykunst and Kim (2003:22-50) and Gudykunst (1995b).

[45] Earlier Hall (1959) argued that culture is communication, taking note of how cultural understandings of time, space, mannerisms, voice inflections, etc. communicate along with the words said in these contexts.

[46] Dodd (1998:173) states that these are three of the most common and central outcomes related to intercultural effectiveness that are found in the research literature.

[47] For the sake of clarity, Dodd's model only depicts two parties engaged in the intercultural conversation. There could be many parties and the number of persons within a party could range from one to many. Though additional parties would make things more complex, the salient features of his model would still apply. I see it as pertinent to group Bible study that includes the biblical text and participants from one or more cultural backgrounds (all of which are different from the cultural background of the biblical text).

[48] Dodd roots his understanding in the discussions of perception and attribution by Applegate and Sypher (1983), Applegate and Sypher (1988), Casmir (1985), and Ehrenhaus (1983). Dodd limits his association with constructivist theory to the understanding of perception and social categorization.

[49] Philipsen (1995:26) describes a study by Nofsinger (1976) that indicated people make use of subtle rules (interpretive schemes) to interpret indirect responses to questions. For example, when speakers

ask a question that calls for a "yes" utterance, and their hearers respond with "does a rabbit like another rabbit?" the speakers can interpret the response to be "yes" by employing rules of interpretation. Pearce and Conklin (1979) expanded the study to show how people employ various levels of context to interpret both the indirect response and the intelligibility of the indirect response. They and the works mentioned in the previous note set up hierarchies of context, providing labels for each level. There is no agreement in the literature on what labels to use. I am referring to all levels as interpretive schemes. I will use the term "schemata" when there is a need to refer to interpretive schemes that are within interpretive schemes of a higher level of context.

[50] Hall's (1989[1977]:129ff.) discussion of situational frames and the situational dialects, personalities, and behavior patterns that are considered by people as appropriate within a particular frame provides examples of constructs shared by a cultural group that offer guidelines for behavior in particular settings.

[51] Citing Berger (1979) Gudykunst (1995a:11) states that we are not always motivated to actively reduce our uncertainty. "We try to reduce uncertainty when others act in a deviant fashion, when they provide us with rewards, and when we anticipate seeing them again in the future."

[52] Dodd pulls from several perspectives at this point in his model. He follows Gudykunst and Gumbs (1989) in regard to social categorization influencing which schemata regarding personal identity, cultural identity and social roles a person employs in intercultural interactions. His position is similar to Casmir's (1985:50) position that people confront new situations on the basis of existing stereotypes or schemata and yet may modify the schemata in the light of the new interaction. He draws on Gallois, Frankly-Stokes, Giles, and Coupland's (1988) position that people make moves in interactions relative to the social and personal contexts (including identity attribution and situational constraints) that are operating, and relative to their perception of each other's communicative characteristics. He is influenced by Ting-Toomey's (1989:352) position that "how one constructs and presents a 'self' in a relationship is, to a large degree, situationally-dependent and culturally-dependent."

[53] Third culture was a term introduced by Useem, Useem, and Donoghue (1963:169) to refer to "the behavior patterns created, shared, and learned by men [sic] of different societies who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other." Their focus was on the sub-cultural

characteristics of communities jointly created by and composed of Americans working overseas and the nationals who worked with them.

[54] Casmir and Asuncion-Lande (1989:249) state, "Though beginning with contrasting perceptions and behaviors, two individuals, through their interaction, create a unique setting for their interaction. In the conjoining of their separate cultures, a third culture, more inclusive than the original ones, is created, which both of them now share. Within that third culture, the two can communicate with each other more effectively. Thus a third culture is not merely the result of the fusion of two or more separate entities, but also the product of the "harmonization" of composite parts into a coherent whole."

[55] Casmir (1991:233) states that "third-culture building includes a conscious attempt to better understand the component parts of a climate of care, concern, and mutual respect, rather than one of confrontation based on persuasion paradigms that require submission by some and domination by others."

[56] Cronen and Shuter (1983) and Cronen, Chen, and Pearce (1988) do not use the term "schemata" but they do speak of people developing through interaction with others (1) regulative rules that link together to form logics of conversation and (2) constitutive rules that a particular "speech-act" counts as a particular meaning. I see this as fitting the understanding of "schemata" used by Dodd.

[57] Dodd (1987:4) states that "intercultural effectiveness is related to a positive communication climate. He cites Gudykunst (1977), Gudykunst, Wiseman, and Hammer (1977), and Moran and Harris (1982) as offering further support that developing a third culture is a necessary strategy for producing maximum intercultural communication effectiveness.

[58] The knowledge, feeling, and doing qualities that Dodd indicates are based on empirical research concerned with testable predictors of communication effectiveness (e.g. cognitive complexity, comfort with interpersonal relations/trust, knowledge of host culture, etc.). See Dodd (1987:5-9) and Dodd (1998:174-182) for a listing and brief explanation of these predictors. See Hammer (1989), Ruben (1976), Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989), and Kealey (1989) for examples of the empirical research. In a recent survey of theory and research in this area, Wiseman (2002:210-212) identified the conditions for competent intercultural communication to be knowledge (awareness of information about the people, communication rules, the context, and normative expectations), motivation (affects such as confidence, interest, likes, good

intentions), and skills (performance of behaviors felt to be effective and appropriate in the context for achieving personal dyadic, social, or contextual goals.

[59] Because a text only speaks to us as we read, hear, or remember it, we may need to help it to stimulate our awareness of it being informed by cultural difference by such things as (1) giving attention to features of the text that appear strange to us, (2) bringing forth possible background to the text that contrasts with our own background, (3) observing and questioning the information we are adding to the text in order to help it be meaningful to us, (4) imagining alternative frameworks that could be brought to the interpretation of the text, (5) juxtaposing contrasting interpretations that others have presented, etc.

[60] The earlier discussion of the way biblical writings have been shaped to function as a canon, having the capacity to address people beyond the immediate situation, suggests that biblical writings have already been adjusted to some extent to engage in intercultural communication. The activity of the Holy Spirit while people read a biblical text can also be understood as a way in which the biblical writings (and the God speaking through them) "adapt" their communicative activity to people (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

[61] I do not think that people need to know in advance all that Dodd describes in order to perceive cultural diversity, though it may enhance our ability to recognize it and interpret it. I did not know many of the things Dodd describes when I first went to Korea as a missionary, but I certainly perceived cultural diversity. People do need to recognize that a text or other people may be employing interpretive schemes informed by socialization in another culture if they are to start looking for clues regarding the characteristics of those interpretive schemes.

[62] Gudykunst (1995a:10-15; 2003:31) contends that both uncertainty and anxiety must remain between minimum and maximum thresholds for people to be motivated to communicate effectively. If they are below the minimum threshold people have high confidence in the predictability of the other, give little consideration to the possibility that their interpretations are wrong, and have little interest or motivation to interact. If they are above the maximum threshold people will be too uncomfortable to interact.

[63] From data in a study examining intercultural effectiveness of Canadian technical advisors posted to 20 developing countries, Kealey (1989:409-410) postulated that on the foundation of mutual trust developed through intercultural contact, "learning is facilitated and transfer of skills may take place because the National counterpart becomes openly receptive to gain from the experience of one whom he

respects." It is through gaining the respect and confidence of Nationals (developing positive interpersonal relationships) that "a rewarding transfer and exchange of skills and knowledge can evolve." This suggests that people's openness to perceive and receive meaning from biblical texts that call for innovation in their behavior will significantly correlate with the respect and trust relationship they are developing in the biblical texts (and God speaking through them).

[64] I mention God, other interpreters, and the biblical texts as all participating in the intercultural conversation because this is congruent with Hiebert's (Hiebert 1988; Hiebert, Shaw, Tiénou 1999b:369-387) advocacy that the Holy Spirit, the Christian community, and the Bible all need to be involved in the process of critical contextualization. It also fits with the earlier discussion of the theological reading of Scripture which involves a communal dimension of reading and reading in the Spirit.

[65] Broome (1991:240-243) speaks of this in terms of "relational empathy" and roots it in a relational view of understanding based on the phenomenology of Heidegger and Gadamer that emphasizes a *productive* rather than a *reproductive* approach to understanding. Dodd (1998:193) cites this essay with approval.

[66] For example when I taught a class in the Philippines, some of my students were concerned with the phenomenon of various TV shows and advertisers offering large amounts of money to, say, the 15th person who called a phone number. They saw the phenomenon as undermining a work ethic in Filipino culture and studied some Bible texts with interests in seeing how they might address the issue. One of the texts they studied was Matthew 6:19-34. They interpreted the text as having the communicative interest of eliciting dependence upon God rather than upon material possessions as the source of security and well-being. After some time of interaction with the text and each other, they coordinated this interest of the text with their own interests by interpreting one of the problems of "easy money" to be its subtle way of encouraging people to seek for well-being from a financial windfall rather than dependence upon God, thereby compromising relationship with God which in turn has attendant consequences, such as a poor work ethic.

[67] Philipsen (1995:29) describes studies of coordination in simulated conversation that give evidence that people have the ability through interaction to modify and coordinate rule systems (interpretive schemes) to achieve a desired outcome, even when they are limited to employing two distinct

artificial languages. These studies also correlate the effectiveness of the coordination to the degree of disparity between the rule systems.

[68] Ehrenhaus (1983:264) cites a study by Tannen (1979) that provides empirical evidence that people use interpretive schemes to fill in gaps and indeterminacies. In the study, Tannen investigated how structures of expectations (interpretive schemes) related to the narratives people supplied in response to watching a brief silent film. Both Greeks and Americans were showed the film and then were asked to narrate what had happened. The two groups created diverse and sometimes contradictory narratives, supplying moral judgments, including and deleting information in the film, and manufacturing novel elements to fit their narratives. Erhenhaus states, "The narratives fit subjects' expectations for what events could occur, how and why they occurred, and what motives guided the characters."

[69] The possibility of a text stimulating the employment or construction of different schemes is suggested by some studies in Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory. Philipsen (1995:36-37) describes a study by Branham and Pearce (1985) that explored the idea of contextual reconstruction. Contextual reconstruction is understood as occurring "when a text occurs in but alters the expectations in which it is understood and evaluated." In the study they show how various maneuvers in Senator Edward Kennedy's "Television Statement to the People of Massachusetts" was able to recast public opinion regarding Kennedy's actions related to the drowning of a woman who was his passenger when he drove off a bridge.

[70] This is related to Gudykunst's (1995a:12-13) position regarding anxiety. He defines anxiety as "an emotional (affective) response to situations based on the anticipation of negative consequences." He argues that when anxiety exceeds a maximum threshold, people focus their attention exclusively on the anxiety rather than on communication with others.

[71] Theological reading rules might be understood as directions to employ empathy with a text. Rogers (1995:19) defines empathy as "the ability of an individual to project into the role of another." Presuming a text has communicative intent, being open to expanding our horizons to understand it, and attending to its relation to the whole canon seems to me to involve imaginatively projecting into the role that the text is playing in the canonical context. Reading in the Spirit assumes some mutuality between our past and present experiences of God and what is informing the text, thus becoming a resource for empathy.

Buie (1981:294-297) holds that people employ conceptual, self-experience, imaginative imitation, and resonance referents as means for projecting into the role of another in response to cues they perceive. Rogers (1995:19) proposes that "more effective communication occurs when two or more individuals are homophilous," and he sees high empathy as means for people otherwise heterophilous to be in a socio-psychological sense homophilous. Rogers (1995:272) holds that research indicates earlier adopters of an innovation have greater empathy than later adopters, suggesting that empathy in relation to a text may correlate with openness to receive whatever innovation one perceives to be presented by the text.

[72] E.g. Brown and Yule (1983:1) and Stubbs (1983:1,9-10)

[73] Brown and Yule (1983:1-2) argue that linguists, linguistic philosophers, and western cultural mythology recognize that language may perform numerous functions, but often assume that the communication of information is the most important function. They thereby neglect investigating the significance of the other functions. Donovan (2003:22) provides an example of a culture where a function other than communicating information is primary by stating that Africans such as the Masai primarily use words to set up social relationships.

[74] Green (2000:31n.15) states, "'Cotext' refers to the string of linguistic data within which a text is set, the relationship of, say, a sentence to a paragraph, and a paragraph to the larger whole. 'Context' refers to the sociohistorical realities within which the text is set and to which it gives witness."

[75] Stubbs (1983:1,9) observes that the term *discourse analysis* is ambiguous, with various researchers not agreeing on what is the referent of the term "discourse." The description I am giving here is drawn from several works that Green cites and Green's own description of discourse analysis. See in particular Brown and Yule (1983:1,26) and Stubbs (1983:1,9-10). This understanding, though with variability in where emphases are concentrated, continues to be present in treatments of discourse analysis. For example, Gee (1999:1) states his concern to study "how the details of language get recruited, 'on site,' to 'pull off' specific social activities and social identities."

[76] Green (1995b:176-178) observes that most scholars who employ discourse analysis in New Testament study focus on text-linguistics, i.e., the relation between the way a text is structured and its meaning. Pragmatics is another dimension of discourse analysis that examines the relationship between speech and unarticulated shared presuppositions. Green is concerned to employ both text-linguistics and

pragmatics in his analysis of biblical texts and those who are reading them. He consequently seeks to discover both articulated and unarticulated personal, cultural and literary relations within which a text has been set by the writer(s) and its readers.

[77] See Thompson's (1991) introduction to the thought of Bourdieu.

[78] Green (1995b:178) places this assumption in contrast to the focus on historical verification of a biblical text and historical reconstruction of the circumstances that gave rise to a biblical text that has dominated biblical studies during the past two centuries. This assumption does not exclude historical investigation. It directs interest in historical questions to take the form of discerning elements in a biblical text's historical context that may direct our perception of its words and modes of argument (Green 1995a:7).

[79] Green (1992:460) observes how narratives can draw people into new worlds and within those worlds undergird or undermine what people have been assuming. He quotes Umberto Eco (1984:25) as saying, "A text is not simply a communicational apparatus. It is a device which questions the previous signifying systems, often renews them, and sometimes destroys them." Green (2000:41) cites Wuthnow's (1989) study of how cultural products that have wide influence beyond the time and circumstance of their creation both articulate close enough to their social environment to speak powerfully to it, yet also are autonomous enough from that environment to introduce change and articulate responses to questions that are of concern to people in many times and places.

[80] Green (1992:463-4) observes some additional ways that Luke uses features of an honor/shame oriented culture. Luke states in 1:7 that Zechariah and Elizabeth were advanced in years, significant in a culture where honor comes with age. Zechariah is on duty as one chosen by God to enter the Holy Place of the Temple, the center of the Jewish world (Luke 1:8-9). Both the duty and the location ascribe honor. Elizabeth has had her claims to honor compromised by childlessness, and interprets her pregnancy to be a taking away of her disgrace (Luke 1:25).

[81] Green (1992:465) observes that Luke portrays Mary as a young girl "in an insignificant town in a racially mixed region" (Luke 1:26-27), with no mention of her family.

[82] See Green (1992:466-468). Green (1992:467) states that by affirming she is a servant of the Lord, Mary is deriving her status from having relationship with God, thereby providing an example that the

community of God's people have their fundamental social experience grounded in their relationship to God. Notice (Green 1992:470-471) the continuation of the transmuting of status theme in Mary's song: "for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48); "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly" (Luke 1:52).

[83] Notice how this fits with Wolfgang Iser's (1974:290) contention that "the efficacy of a literary text is brought about by the apparent evocation and subsequent negation of the familiar. What at first seemed to be an affirmation of our assumptions leads us to our own rejection of them, thus tending to prepare us for a re-orientation."

[84] Green (1997:12) understands the "possible readers" the text is addressing in terms of Eco's "model reader." Eco (1979:7) states, "To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them."

[85] Fasold (1984:ix) observes how people use language to define the social situation. He states, "It is obvious that language is supposed to be used for transmitting information and thoughts from one person to another. At the same time, however, the speaker is using language to make statements about who she is, what her group loyalties are, how she perceives her relationship to her hearer, and what sort of speech event she considers herself to be engaged in. The two tasks (communicating information and defining the social situation) can be carried out simultaneously precisely because language varies – speakers can choose among alternative linguistic means, any of which would satisfactorily communicate the propositional information. It is the selection among these alternatives that defines the social situation." Green's position suggests that people perceive the way a social situation is defined by a speaker's choice of words in relation to their perception of the characteristics of the setting and the ongoing social interaction within which they occur.

[86] Our own social relations to Jesus and the Christian movement will also impact how we read and engage the situation in which the expression, "Hail, king of the Jews" occurs. If we are not a part of the Christian movement and relate to Jesus as a good but historically distant man, we might read the situation

as the tragedy of what the powerful do to good people who threaten their interests. If we are part of the Christian movement and experience Jesus as our Lord and Savior we might read and engage the situation as one where Jesus fulfills the role of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, healing our sins through being despised and rejected by people.

[87] Stubbs (1983:8) affirms this assumption and provides numerous examples throughout his book. Brown and Yule (1983:27-31) make this assumption when they discuss how people use context to make clear the reference of their words, and when they discuss how speakers speak in ways that presuppose certain things to be commonly understood by all participants in the conversation.

[88] Malina (1986:148-152) discusses this in relation to biblical interpretation. He (1986:149) states that "patterns of language at a level higher than the sentence derive from the social system of the author." He (1986:149-150) goes on to say that "all the attitudes, values, and behavioral interactions described in the Bible are necessarily misunderstood, or are simply not understood, without some appreciation and understanding of the social system assumed and reflected in the biblical writing...A Bible reader who wishes to understand these terms [peace, wealth, poverty, humility, love] is left with the option of *reading in* the meanings and scenarios prevailing in our social system, or of learning to interpret the Bible in terms of scenarios appropriate to the social systems familiar to biblical authors."

[89] Green (1994:64-74) argues that in Greco-Roman antiquity economic issues were subordinate to status issues, with the non-economic dimensions of status issues determining much about how one could or could not participate in society. The usage of "poor" in the Old Testament characteristically referred to people who are susceptible to exploitation by those in power and must look to God for deliverance from that exploitation. Such people could include both the destitute and those with small property holdings. In Luke's usage, the "poor" are associated with those who are marginalized by society. It is Jesus' mission to "release" such people through forgiving their sins and freeing them from the binding power of Satan. Such forgiveness and freeing signifies wholeness and acceptance into the community of God.

[90] Berger (1969:22) goes so far as to state that people "are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality." He (1969:5-6) roots this in the limited amount of instincts that people have, compared to animals, thereby making it necessary for people to socially create firm structures to order their lives.

[91] Green (1995a:3) states, "In reading, we decipher marks on the page and understand them as meaningful, and we do so in ways that reflect what we have learned before – for example, about other similar marks on pages (and, so, about word and sentence construction, argument formation, and the like), about the world reflected in this Gospel, about the nature of "the Jews" or of this "Jesus" about whom the Evangelist writes, and indeed about the Gospel of Luke itself."

[92] Green (1997:6) identifies Luke-Acts as being similar to ancient historiography in its literary components (symposia, travel narratives, speeches, etc.) and arrangement. This stimulates those who know or become aware of the way this genre functions to anticipate "a narrative in which recent history is given prominence, issues of both causation and teleology are accorded privilege, and determined research is placed in the service of persuasive and engaging instruction."

[93] Green (1997:98-105) extensively draws attention to numerous additional literary patterns and relationships that are present within and between Mary's Song and its co-text. All of these help us to perceive the communicative aim of the song and thereby stimulates our perception of what the song is saying to us.

[94] Green (1991) shows how the literary design of the Gospel of Mark leads people to keep recasting their expectations of who Jesus is and what it means to follow him from ones concerned with exercising power and receiving benefit into ones that are increasingly identified by the way of the cross.

[95] Iser (1974:280) states, "With all literary texts, then, we may say that the reading process is selective, and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations. This is borne out by the fact that a second reading of a piece of literature often produces a different impression from the first. The reasons for this may lie in the reader's own change of circumstances, still, the text must be such as to allow this variation. On a second reading familiar occurrences now tend to appear in a new light and seem to be at times corrected, at times enriched."

[96] For a detailed example of how a particular value in a discourse situation may be investigated, see Green (1994).

[97] I have formulated these questions myself, but they reflect the kinds of questions found in Green (1991) and in my own observation of Green leading discussions.

[98] Green (1994:64 note 23) cites Brown and Yule (1983:79-83) as the source for this understanding of presupposition pools in relation to discourse analysis. Brown and Yule draw upon the work of Venneman (1975).

[99] Green (1997:55 note 22) directs us to notice the parallels between Genesis 16:7-13; 17:1-21; 18:1-15; Judges 13:3-20; Matthew 1:20-21; Luke 1:11-20, 26-37; 2:9-12.

[100] Green (1997:5 note 23) directs us to notice the similarities and differences with Exodus 3:1-4:16; Judges 6:11-24; 1 Kings 19:1-19a; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1:4-12).

[101] Capps (1995:161) quotes Durkheim as follows: "This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought." Capps notes that Durkheim's distinction between sacred and profane is a division of reality into two modalities, with sacred things being identified and protected from contamination from the profane through mythic story and ritual behavior.

[102] Berger (1969:25-26) states, "The historical manifestations of the sacred vary widely, though there are certain uniformities to be observed cross-culturally...The sacred is apprehended as 'sticking out' from the normal routines of everyday life, as something extraordinary and potentially dangerous, though its dangers can be domesticated and its potency harnessed to the needs of everyday life. Although the sacred is apprehended as other than man [sic], yet it refers to man [sic], relating to him in a way which other non-human phenomena (specifically, the phenomena of non-sacred nature) do not."

[103] Paden 1994:52) holds that all creatures organize their environment in terms of their own needs and values, paying attention to what is important to them and ignoring the rest. He appears to follow Berger (1969:5-6) in rooting world building in the biological makeup of people. Whereas animals organize their world via their senses and instincts, people need to socially structure their environment in order to have a requisite amount of order within which to live.

[104] Berger (1969:45) states, "Worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained. Their continuing reality, both objective (as common, taken-for-granted facticity) and subjective (as facticity imposing itself upon individual consciousness), depends upon specific social processes, namely those processes that ongoingly reconstruct and maintain the particular worlds in question. Conversely, the interruption of these social processes threatens the (objective and subjective) reality of the worlds in

question. Thus each world requires a social 'base' for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. This 'base' may be called its plausibility structure."

[105] Though Paden (1994:53) borrows the "world" concept from Berger (1969), he notes some other traditions that influence his understanding. He references the Durkheim tradition that correlates social structures and cosmological religious structures. He observes the many different cultural worlds that have been described by anthropologists, indicating people's ability to create very diverse worlds. He notes Cassirer's (1953:28) position that "theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already preformed by language." He also notes Bloor's (1983) interpretation of Wittgenstein that all knowledge is constituted through participation in the "language games" of social groups. He further references the writings of Michel Foucault regarding the way that "different periods and social classes shape the world according to their special configuration of values, power relationships, and knowledge."

[106] In this, Paden (1994:46-47) indicates he is following in the tradition of Wilhelm Dilthey who held that "knowledge in the humanities meant 'understanding' (*Verstehen*), as opposed to 'explaining' the experience of others." Natanson (1963:278-280) states that for Max Weber, Verstehen meant interpretive understanding of the meaning acts have for the actors within the matrix of meaning in which the acts occur. Natanson observes that Alfred Schutz discerned that *Verstehen* has three levels of application. One is the mode of understanding utilized by people in daily life to interpret each other's actions. A second is a method in the social sciences to typify interpretations made by people in daily life and to set these typifications into a theoretical system that clarifies them. A third is an epistemological problem pursued by philosophers. Paden's conceptual framework seeks to understand both in the first and second level of application.

[107] Paden (1994:40-41) follows van der Leeuw's (1963) contention that in order to achieve understanding of religious expressions, we must suspend judgment on the ultimate reality of their referent and seek to understand what they mean to participants. Capps (1995:114) states the suspension of judgment about the ultimate nature of things goes back to Husserl's methodological technique of *epoché*. Paden (1994:169-170) does not hold that we should never come to judgments about religious behavior. He states, "first understanding, then evaluation."

[108] Paden (1994:44) notes how van der Leeuw (1963) sought to understand the religious function of 106 religious forms. The subtitle of Eliade (1959), *The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual within Life and Culture,* clearly expresses Eliade's concern with the functions of religious forms, what they contribute to the experience of religious people, and what experience is lost by those who live in a desacralized world.

[109] Some of these earlier efforts can be seen in the work of Cornelius Petrus Tiele (1897-1899), Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (1891), and Morris Jastrow (1981 [1902]). They introduced classification schemes for describing and categorizing religious phenomena as a way to map the religious behavior and representations in diverse communities and facilitate comparisons. They had an intentional concern to begin with a morphological description as a means to understanding different religions rather than with a prior commitment as to what constitutes true religion (such as a Christian theological position). They sought to establish the cross-cultural validity of their classification schemes by documenting the widespread presence of data from many religious communities fitting these structures.

[110] Paden (1994:163) states that it is his hypothesis that these structures have theoretical cohesiveness through the way they each illustrate the process of world definition. He sees them to be working categories that should be explored and tested in field study, and used only as long as they enhance our understanding.

[111] Paden (1994:57) specifically contrasts this to relying on only religious beliefs to discern what people deem to be sacred and their relationship to the sacred. He (1994:54) states, "Worlds are not maintained by pure ideas but by actual communities that commit themselves to those ideas through socialization processes. He (1994:11) also states that the comparative study of religion needs "to discern not only what is sacred but how the sacred is engaged."

[112] Paden (1994:4) states, "only by seeing what is common between things can one see what is different or innovative about any one of them. A Christian or Jewish theology cannot fully understand its own uniqueness and its nuances, without knowing which of its features belong to religion in general and which are distinctively its own."

[113] Though Paden does not refer to him, Paden's contentions for his four structures echo much of the agenda of W. Brede Kristensen (1960). Kristensen made clear the need to avoid forcing religious

phenomena to fit a pre-formed theoretical and interpretive mold (such as Christian theology or enlightenment rationalism) so that the meaning that the phenomena has to the religious community expressing it may be accurately perceived. He held that the categories used for classifying phenomena should be induced from analysis of the phenomena itself. When similar categories are discerned in many religious communities there is a basis to compare with each other the phenomena of all religious communities that belong to that category. Such comparison allows different religious phenomena to illumine each other and to begin to make clear something about the nature of religion. It enables the perception of structural analogies that assist a person from outside a religious tradition to understand (though they may not explain) something of the sense of the sacred that a person inside the tradition is experiencing.

[114] Though Paden focuses on mythic narratives, he (1994:82) also sees ahistorical archetypal images, such as those found in the *I Ching* to function similarly, engaging participants with "different modes, situations, and permutations of nature, change, and life," grounding the religious world.

[115] Mircea Eliade (1963:1) observes how from the time of Xenophanes (ca. 565-470) Greek rationalist thought has been critical of *mythos*, emptying it of religious and metaphysical value, eventually assigning to it the meaning of "what cannot really exist." Hexham and Poewe (1997:80) draw attention to Plato's *Euthyphro* where through Socrates' questions and arguments with a young man who believes the traditional myths are true Plato shows the contradictory nature of Greek mythology from a rationalist perspective. Enlightenment thinkers popularized this understanding of myth, with deists such as Thomas Paine assigning biblical narratives to the category of "myth" in the sense of stories that are untrue. This rationalist understanding of the term along with the association of the term *mythos* with that which is untrue in New Testament texts such as 1 Timothy 1:4, 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14; and 2 Peter 1:16 has encouraged many Christians to avoid using the term myth as a way to refer to biblical narratives. However, there is another ancient understanding of *mythos* that sees it as referring to what is original, primal, and real. It refers to stories that are sacred history and recount how through sacred powers a reality came into existence and continues to be maintained. They present a paradigmatic understanding of reality that can guide human behavior (Eliade 1963:5-8). Paden (1994:71) notes how Bronislaw Malinowski (1948:100) derived from his fieldwork that for people in tribal societies, myth is "a living reality, believed to have once

happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies." Malinowski saw biblical narratives to function in a similar way for Christians. Paden (1994:70-73) holds that in all religious worlds, myth describes what is original, primal, and real, presenting prototypes for human behavior.

[116] For an overview of the story of Buddha, see Lester (1987: 61-69). For excerpts from one of the actual narrations of the story, see Markham (1996:116-121).

[117] The extensiveness of the ways that the narrative of the Buddha presents enduring paradigms for identifying and dealing with the networks of relations within which Buddhist devotees perceive themselves to live is expressed well in the following paragraph from Lester (1987:69): The great events of the Buddha story are well know to every devotee. The Buddha's former lives, especially the one as Prince Vessantara, are remembered in acts of charity. His birth, enlightenment, and death are celebrated as events of great power by festivals, pilgrimages to Lumbini and Bodh Gaya, and the building of *stupas*. The Great Renunciation is reenacted at every ordination to the monastic order. Various mishaps of life are commonly referred to as due to the attack of Mara, and they are faced with the confidence of knowing that the Buddha conquered Mara. The incident of the Earth Goddess witnessing to the Buddha's merit is appealed to in every act of transferring or sharing merit in the Theravada tradition. The whole story of the Buddha concretely illustrates the integration of gods and spirits into the Buddhist worldview and the subordination of these powers to the power of the Buddha. The gods honor and serve the Buddha and the spirits are vanquished by his power; these episodes provide inspiration for many of the rituals of daily life.

[118] This is similar to what Paul Tillich (1955:109) says about religious symbolism: "This is the great function of symbols, to point beyond themselves in the power of that to which they point, to open up levels of reality which otherwise are closed, and to open up levels of the human mind of which we otherwise are not aware." Tillich says that such symbols (and Paden would include mythic language) are born out of a creative encounter with reality and participate in the power of that reality. If that encounter with reality ceases, their function as religious symbols will also cease.

[119] Eliade (1963:24-28) gives several examples from different religious worlds of how cosmogonic myths are recited or enacted to empower healing. I have witnessed biblical texts recited prior to ritual activities of anointing and laying on of hands that express the faith of a Christian community that God will

bring healing. Paden (1994:87) notes how Thai boys reenact the journey of Prince Siddhartha Gautama before they transition to the next phase of life by entering the monastery. Christian weddings are solemnized by reference to the biblical narrative, with the words, "What God has joined together let no one put asunder" (Paden 1994:81). Paden (1994:88-89) quotes Eliade's (1976:18) example of how in Timor, newly sprouted rice plants are helped to be strong and vigorous by a person spending the night in the field reciting the myth of how people came to possess rice. Paden (1994:81,87) notes how religious world renewal takes place as Christians re-enact the Christmas and Easter story annually, Jews reenact the Passover, Buddhist laypeople who go on retreat repeat the great departure of Gautama, the daily prayers of Muslims recite the opening words of the Qur'an, etc.

[120] Paden (1994:90) states, "Much of myth's powers and endurance resides in its capacity to address and resolve conflicts and contradictions in human experience." They can be brought into relation to the needs of everyday life.

[121] Paden (1994:91) states, "There is a certain paradox here. Myth – the eternal, fixed archetype – turns out to be creative. It reveals an internal elasticity, a capacity to unfold new contents, a play of applicability."

[122] It must be recognized that a religious world may have a number of myths that network with each other in various ways to order the religious worlds that embrace them. Robert J. Schreiter (1985:144-158) discusses in detail the different ways that elements of religious systems may mix, combine, or be practiced alongside each other in the religious world of a particular community. Some myths may be overarching and play central roles in organizing the religious world. There may also be what Hexham and Poewe (1997:84-92) call box myths that address specific issues such as para-psychological experiences, prophecy and fate, healing, and the decline and transformation of the world. These box myths may circulate within and alongside of the central mythology of a community.

[123] R. Daniel Shaw (2000:836) states that ritual utilizes the mode of performance to bring myth to life, providing a means for beliefs and values to be displayed.

[124] Paden (1994:94) holds that efforts of some to reduce all ritual to instrumental magic or something that is mechanical and regimented devoid of significant meaning overlook the ways ritual constructs and maintains religious worlds.

[125] Of course, a particular ritual may become a mechanistic performance emptied of most of its meaning for the participants. Paden's point is that where one finds a religious world, one will also find sacred rituals that are actively expressing, structuring, and maintaining that world.

[126] The Christian communion ritual offers another example of how ritual intensifies focus. It is generally done in a room and at a time set aside for Christian worship of God. It uses visual stimuli to draw attention to the communion elements situated in a central position in front of the community. Songs are sung and words are spoken that point to what the communion ritual expresses in regard to the community's relation to God, each other, and the way of life the community aspires to follow. Prayer that draws people to focus on the meaning that receiving the communion elements has for those relationships precedes and follows the corporate eating of the elements. The activity of receiving and eating the communion elements is done with a heightened awareness that each detail of that activity expresses an understanding and embracing of life in relation to God. The location, the sensory stimuli, and the liturgy all serve to draw the participant's attention to concentrate on fundamental relationships in their religious world and release them for a brief time from other distractions.

[127] The space may be exclusively set aside for periodic ritual activity at scheduled times, such as a church sanctuary, a temple structure, or some other defined space. Activity of preparation such as the setting up of a sacred object, the laying down of a prayer mat, or the uttering of a consecration prayer may also provide the creation of temporary boundaries for rituals that are not confined to particular locations.

[128] Paden (1994:97) states that this framing of ritual by thresholds and set aside space and time enhances the content of ritual, sets other things off as extraneous, and raises people's consciousness that entry into a ritual is entry into a sacred arena.

[129] The discussion of Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:296-300) on the structure of rituals points to the significance of entering and exiting sacred space and time for constructing and maintaining religious worlds. Following lines laid out by the study of Arnold van Gennep (1960) on rites of passage and Victor Turner's (1969) research on the ritual process, they observe that most rituals have three stages. In the first stage people engage in symbolic behavior that separates them from some fixed point in the social structure or cultural conditions. Putting on special clothes, washing, prayer, etc. all can be means of detaching people from the structures and patterns of relating that exist outside the sacred space and time and of ushering

them across the threshold into sacred space and time. In the second stage the ritual provides another set of structures and patterns of relating that are appropriate for people to engage in while they are within sacred space and time. The new structures and patterns create a situation where transformation of some kind may occur. The participants are at the margin of normal social structure, having been loosed from the statuses, roles and situations they occupied prior to the ritual and from whatever statuses, roles and situations they might occupy after the ritual. This liminal condition serves to open the participants to experience the fundamental values, communal bonds, sacred power, teaching, and transformation with which the ritual is concerned. In the third stage people symbolically exit the sacred space and time and are reincorporated into the structures and patterns of relating that exist outside the ritual. However, they carry with them the transforming effects and sense of the sacred they experienced within the ritual.

[130] In the Christian communion ritual, the Christian community employs all the senses as it engages in the ritual. The communion elements are seen, touched, smelled, tasted. They are eaten in association with words that the people hear spoken or sung. The meaning of the ritual is engaged and experienced through concrete activity that involves mind and body with the communion elements. The same utilization of all the senses and of bodily activity is true of the Japanese tea ceremony.

[131] Geertz (1966:28) states that in a ritual "...the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men [sic] and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men [sic] meet and reinforce one another. In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality." He (1966:38) states, "Having ritually 'lept'...into the framework of meaning which religious conceptions define and, the ritual ended, returned again to the common-sense world, a man [sic] is – unless, as sometimes happens, the experience fails to register – changed. And as he [sic] is changed so also is the common-sense world, for it is now seen as but the partial form of a wider reality which corrects and completes it."

[132] Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:311-314) call these rituals "rites of intensification." They understand them to be characterized by a remembering and reaffirmation of reality as it has been passed down to them, high order and predictability, normative communitas (a ritually induced liminal state where the renewal of fundamental social order is emphasized, cf. Turner 1969:132), and renewal of sacred order,

meaning, and purpose. They also note that over time such periodic rituals sometimes lose their efficacy and become dead traditions.

[133] Paden (1994:101) presents as examples the Catholic Mass where Christ's sacrifice for humanity is performed, and the Passover where the Exodus is recalled. Eliade (1959:77-80) presents the example of the New Year ceremonies of ancient Babylon and Persia.

[134] Paden (1994:101-102) cites Roger Caillois' (1959) description of the way annual festivals purge the old and bring about wholesale renewal through a paroxysm of world order, combining such things as fasting and feasting, contrition and celebration, death and new life. Paden presents as examples the Christian Lenten abstinence followed by Easter celebration, and the Muslim fasting and feasting during Ramadan.

[135] Paden (1994:103) names gift exchange, visiting, feasting together, visitation to grave sites, displays of compassion and good will as typical symbolic practices that reconstitute social relationships. He presents the Muslim Id al Fitr, the Hindu Divali, the East Asian New Year festivals, the Parsi New Year, and the Christmas season as examples.

[136] Paden (1994:111) presents as examples the Roman Saturnalia, the feast of fools in medieval France, Mardi Gras, and Halloween. See Turner (1969:172-188) for discussion and examples of how such rituals reinforce life in the sacred order.

[137] Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:303-311, 316-318) call these rites of transformation and rites of crisis. Common to both classes is the concern to bring change, be it to people or the environment, through connecting with the sacred and the order the sacred provides to the world. Paden focuses on the rites of transformation.

[138] Paden (1994:114-115) states that the Muslim whispers the call to prayer in the newborn baby's ear, indicating the centrality of prayer in Muslim identity. Infant baptism in Christian communities indicates the centrality of grace, salvation, and community membership for Christian identity. The Gikuyu tribe provides a young child with a wristlet of goatskin symbolizing that a child's identity is bound to both the living and the dead in the tribe.

[139] Paden (1994:117-118) states that in the *Upanayana* ceremony, Hindu youths assume full religious duties, hearing scripture recited for the first time, learning the sacred prayer they will henceforth

perform every morning, and being placed under a guru. In Islam the circumcision rite associated with male membership is often performed on the occasion when the boys have completed their first time through a recitation of the Qur'an. The Jewish bar mitzvah and bas mitzvah involves those entering adulthood in a public reading of the Torah. In Burmese Buddhism, boys ceremonially are dressed in princely clothes and then join in Guatama's renunciation, having their heads shaved, donning the yellow robe and going on a mini retreat in the monastery.

[140] For example, Korean culture is strongly influenced by Confucian hierarchical relationships in family and community life. In a Korean folk religious world, ancestors and household deities are included within these relationships. When problems such as illness, repeated accidents, inability to conceive children, etc. occur, people living in a Korean folk religious world may suspect the problems are due to some disruption in their relationships with their ancestors or household deities. They may arrange for a *kut* ceremony to provide an opportunity to encounter the ancestors and deities and bargain with them. During the *kut* ceremony, people may experience what they perceive to be encounters with ancestors and local deities as such persons sequentially take possession of a shaman. The ancestor or local deity is recognized as the shaman begins to express some of the characteristics and mannerisms of the person and directly addresses those who are present at the ceremony. Interactions with the ancestor or deity will follow the same patterns as interactions with parents and local government officials. See Laurel Kendall (1985) for an insightful and detailed description and analysis of late 20th century Shamanism in Korea.

[141] Eliade (1959:21-22,36-42) argued that for every religious community a hierophany (manifestation of the sacred) revealed to the members of that community a center, an *axis mundi*, that becomes a central axis for all future orientation in their religious world. Oral and literary myths give accounts of the hierophanies that establish the *axis mundi*. Some well-known examples of an *axis mundi* are the Ka'ba in Mecca for Islam, the Jewish temple in Jerusalem for Judaism, and the person of Jesus Christ for Christianity. The points of focus where people may engage with a god generally bear some connection with what people perceive to be the *axis mundi* in their religious world, replicating it, extending it, or somehow directing attention to the engagement with the sacred other that was made possible at the *axis mundi*.

[142] Paden (1994:135) note as an example Martin Luther's vow to pursue a monastic vocation when his life was spared during a terrible lightning storm. A logical extension of his thought would suggest that the occurrence of such encounters impress or reinforce a sense that conceptions of the sacred and the nature of the world that people perceive to be associated with those encounters are in fact reality and that the moods and motivations to live in tune with that reality have a genuine basis.

[143] Paden (1994:137) notes that in different religious worlds, the protocol for petition may be such diverse actions as self-accusation, flattery, vows, conciliation, and meditation. Depending on the expectations and standards of a god, petition may involve formal rites, spontaneous personal prayer, or ascetic acts.

[144] This is not to imply that what people do is what removes the offenses. Paden is referring to what people are expected to do if they are to receive atonement. Some gods may require self-mutilation, others confession of sin, others some kind of self (or community)-chastening (Paden 1994:138-139).

[145] Paden (1994:139) notes the gifts may range from animals or foods to the people themselves.

[146] Paden (1994:140) notes that the premise of this is that "there is a synchronistic sympathy between the wholeness of life and each fragment of it, and, therefore, the action of gods can be deciphered by scrutinizing certain patterns in nature and interpreting them as signs or adumbrations of the future."

[147] Paden (1994:142) quotes Mary Douglas' (1966:35) comment, "Where there is dirt, there is system." He notes Douglas' argument that all systems (including religious worlds) have their own versions of what can dangerously pollute the integrity of the system, violating its categories.

[148] Mircea Eliade (1959) argues that the sacred is only known in relation to the profane and defines the sacred as that which is opposite the profane. People become aware of the sacred through experiences in which the sacred shows itself to them as something wholly different from the profane. As a result of those experiences, people make distinctions between behavior that express appropriate and inappropriate relations with the sacred. An example of what Eliade means is presented by Genesis 28:10-19. Jacob is on a journey from Beersheba to Haran and when night comes he stops for the night and sleeps on what he considers to be ordinary or profane ground. During the night he has a dream in which he sees a ladder reaching to heaven and hears the voice of God speaking to him. When he awakes Jacob thinks, "Surely the LORD is in this place" and he sets up a pillar, pours oil on it and makes a vow to God. The ordinary place

has become a sacred place, wholly different from other ordinary places even though in terms of physical characteristics nothing has changed, and Jacob alters his behavior in relation to that place in ways that he perceives to be fitting to the presence of the sacred that he experienced there.

[149] Paden (1994:145) quotes Khomeini's (1984:212) comment that the reason a Muslim picks his teeth before the morning Call to Prayer during Ramadan fasting is out of concern that not even a speck of food caught in his teeth will be swallowed during the fast, thereby invalidating the fast. The concern is not for the rule in and of itself, but to pursue the fast and its sacred purpose with the totality of life.

[150] Paden (1994:144) provides the example of an Eskimo taboo that forbids wives to knit while their husbands are hunting with harpoons. The crossing of threads in knitting cannot co-exist with keeping harpoon lines untangled in hunting. The keeping of the taboo by the wives makes their behavior symbolically consonant with the goals of the hunt. I can provide another example of Paden's contention from a Christian practice. When my wife and I teach our son to bow his head and participate in a prayer of thanksgiving to God before we eat a meal, we are concerned with more than teaching him to express respect and thanksgiving to God for the meal. Through the behavior we are intending our son to see all of the provisions for life (food, clothing, shelter, community, etc.) that our community receives to be a gift from God and to express thankfulness to God for other provisions at appropriate times and in appropriate ways. We are further intending to develop within our son an ethos of dependence upon, respect for, and thankfulness to God as he and our community receives or seeks to acquire provisions for life. The purity distinction becomes an avenue for our son to interpret what the sacred narrative of God's creating, maintaining, and loving of the world means in relation to all sorts of activity of receiving or seeking to acquire provisions for life.

[151] Paden (1994:153) notes such prohibitions as the Ten Commandments and the Buddhist Five Precepts, the detachment of karma yoga in the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna teaches Arjuna to do his duties while remaining detached from the results of his actions, and the isolation of monasteries built in inaccessible places.

[152] Paden (1994:154-156) offers "punishment, banishment, shunning, use of scapegoats, exorcism, ritual combat, excommunication, required penance, imprisonment, pronounced forgiveness or pardon, rehabilitation" as examples of different kinds of community imposed infliction. "Acts of repentance,

atonement, expiation, discipline, confession, isolation, fasting, apology, 'soul-searching,' and prayer" are examples of self-imposed infliction. Sacrifice can very from "the simple throw of a coin – an offering – to the heroics of self-immolation or religious suicide; from offering chickens and oxen...to the mystical relinquishment of selfhood itself." "War, persecution, calumny, imprisonment, injustice, abuse of authority, sickness, accident, poverty, failure, scandal, ingratitude, the loss of loved ones, conflict...and even death" are various ways suffering has been seen to be a means by which a god has purged the profane.

[153] Paden (1994:157) notes Jesus associating with impure tax collectors, Gandhi embracing outcasts, yoga practices that participate in normally impure behavior to demonstrate the world's unitary nature, a Zen story of a monk with mind so pure he could without temptation carry a beautiful girl over a muddy road, the African Lele ceremonially eating the heavily tabooed scaly anteater to demonstrate hidden cosmic unity, etc.

[154] These questions are derived from my presentation of Paden's four structures. Paden himself does not organize in one location a set of major questions to guide comparative study via the four structures. The questions I have written are representative rather than exhaustive of what we could pursue in Paden's approach to comparative study.

[155] Paden (1994:54) states that understanding others requires seeing the parts of their world in terms of the whole of their world. What others do has meaning for them within a matrix.

[156] Paden (1994:8) states, "The question here is not what 'they' have to say about 'our' ideas, but rather, what categories must we use in order to hear what others say?" He (1994:163) states, "Categories such as world, myth, ritual time, gods, and purity are justified if they enhance our understanding of religious life or (and this is not insignificant) help us avoid misunderstanding religious life."

CHAPTER 4

Bible Study for Critical Contextualization

This dissertation began by noting that the Willowbank Report proposed the need for a contextual approach to Bible interpretation. If the Bible is to actually function in Christian life in a normative way, stimulating and constraining our contextualization of the gospel, contemporary interpreters need to engage their lives and culture in a dialogical process with biblical texts. The Willowbank Report typified this process as follows: (1) Interpreters should be conscious of their own concerns that arise from their cultural background, personal situation, and responsibility to others. They should engage with biblical texts in the context of those concerns, seeking for how the texts address those concerns. (2) Interpreters should be open to hearing not only answers to their concerns, but also questions from the biblical texts. They should be open to hearing and responding to challenges to their presuppositions, reformulations of their questions, and fresh questions that were initially outside their purview. (3) As interpreters do the above in an ongoing dialog, they should aim to grow in knowledge of, love for, and obedience to God. The process of the ongoing dialog might be characterized as an advancing spiral that keeps the Bible central and normative for faith and life. Paul Hiebert's model of critical contextualization embraces this contextual approach and develops it by presenting a four-step process to facilitate it.[1]

In chapter two we saw how missiological discussions have given attention to four factors that significantly affect the meaning people perceive and receive through their

Bible study. These factors are the social location of the readers, the environment of communal activity and interaction, the historical and cultural particularity of biblical texts, and interactive or circular processes that go back and forth between contemporary life situations and Bible study. In various ways they have been advocated as necessary ingredients for a Bible study strategy that facilitates the transformation of religious worlds. Hiebert's model of critical contextualization is concerned to provide a way to bring into expression the employment of these factors.

Chapter three began by noting that utilization of the four ingredients discussed in the missiological discussions does not automatically make a Bible study strategy transforming. Issues of aims and interests, the distance between the horizons of biblical texts and contemporary horizons, and modes of engagement with biblical texts must also be effectively addressed. These issues clarify why more needs to be said about the characteristics of a Bible study strategy that can facilitate the goals of Hiebert's model. Hiebert gives little attention to these issues and what he does affirm utilizes some problematical language. Dodd's model of intercultural communication, Green's approach to discourse analysis, and Paden's structures of religious world construction all provide ways to address these issues. They can contribute to a Bible study strategy that can integrate with and empower the transformational agenda and mission goal of Hiebert's model.

The following will briefly review the processes and the assumptions of Hiebert's model of critical contextualization. I will then evaluate the model in relation to the hermeneutical issues raised in chapter three and show what Dodd, Green, and Paden can contribute to the model's Bible study strategy so that it more effectively addresses those

issues. I will conclude by offering a new strategy of Bible study that can integrate with, modify, and better facilitate the goals of Hiebert's model. I will employ the image of an intercultural conversation as a framework for explaining the characteristics and processes of my strategy.

Review of Hiebert's Model

Hiebert's model of critical contextualization presents a four-step process through which a Christian community can bring about the dialog of a contextual approach to Bible interpretation. The process is initiated when a Christian community has questions about how to live as Christians in relation to particular issues and concerns presented to them by their cultural heritage and contemporary situation. In the first step of the process, leaders of the Christian community guide their community in a phenomenological study of particular cultural beliefs and practices that people in their local contexts associate with the issue or concern. For example, suppose a Christian community had a question about how Christians should bury their dead. Leaders of the community would help their community describe in detail current practices of burying the dead in their cultural context and ask members of the community to discuss what those practices mean to people in their culture. They would help them explore and discern how the practices are parts of larger systems of belief and worldviews. This step is Hiebert's way of preparing Christians to bring their social location into interaction with the Bible.

In the second step, leaders guide their community in an examination of biblical texts that speak to the issue or concern. Hiebert (Hiebert 1987:109-111; Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999b:22-27, 386) portrays this examination primarily in terms of the leaders presenting to their community the truths of relevant biblical texts.[2] In order to perform

this role, the leaders are responsible to analyze the categories, logic, and truths, revealed in the Bible, and to learn the overall biblical narrative. This provides them with a framework that helps them to discern biblical truths that speak to the questions that have been posed. In connection with this framework the leaders need to employ exegetical strategies and observe theological criteria repeatedly affirmed by church tradition to discern the truths presented by biblical texts that speak to the issue or concern. They further need to develop and use a metacultural framework to translate the biblical truths they discern into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of the local culture. For example, Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:24) indicate that Christian beliefs about death and resurrection are relevant to a question about how Christians are to bury their dead. Leaders would use their expertise to locate biblical texts that express those Christian beliefs and translate the truths expressed by those texts into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of their cultural communities.[3] This is Hiebert's way of dealing with the historical cultural particularity of biblical texts and making it possible for a contemporary Christian community to interact with them.

The third step directs leaders to guide their communities in an evaluation of the beliefs and practices that they discerned in step one. They evaluate them in the light of the biblical truths they studied and understood in step two. In that evaluation they determine what beliefs and practices may be retained, what must be discarded, what should be modified, and what should be replaced by a functional substitute in order to express a Christian response to the issue or concern. Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:27-28, 386) stress that leaders must include the rest of the people in the evaluation. This elicits stronger ownership of any choices the community may make to

implement a Christian response to the issue or concern. It also permits community insights regarding possible responses and the ramifications of proposed responses to be expressed and enter into the evaluation. The goal of the evaluation is for the community to discern and embrace beliefs and practices that are both Christian and culturally relevant. This is Hiebert's way of bringing about interaction between Bible study and life situations in a specific social location.

In the fourth step, leaders guide their communities in choosing the ways they will implement Christian responses to the issue or concern. Such responses include the construction of Christian ritual expressions and the establishment of ministries that transform individuals and churches into expressions of biblical teachings that relevantly address the particulars of cultural life. Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:28, 388-389) affirm that the transformation of persons and churches is a process that is often slow and halting, and may have partial reversals. They direct ministries of transformation to focus on people, engaging the particulars of their lives, and building relationships of love and trust. Christian responses must seek for personal transformation as well as transformation of social and cultural systems. This, along with community involvement in the previous three steps, is Hiebert's way of engaging the Bible in the environment of communal activity and interaction.

Hiebert (1988) indicates that the four steps of his model are to be engaged within the context of an ongoing process through which the church is developing as a Christian hermeneutical community. This makes the steps part of a cyclic process where Christian communities critically contextualize the gospel into more and more areas of their cultural lives. He makes explicit that the following theological assumptions underlie the process

of his model. He sees the gospel of the kingdom of God as prophetically challenging all cultures to embrace God's ideals. Those who respond to the gospel are to form communities that bring the nature of the kingdom of God into expression in their cultural situation. Such communities are to engage in an ongoing process of studying and understanding the Bible, seeking through that study to be disciples of Jesus Christ in every area of life. Communities are to study the Bible as divine revelation, depending upon the Holy Spirit to guide their interpretation. The church, both locally and globally, is a hermeneutical community, with others in the community providing checks on the personal biases of individual interpretations and the cultural biases of interpretations made by local communities.

Geertz's understanding of religion as a cultural system and the critical realism of Charles Peirce's triadic view of signs help to make clear what Hiebert understands to be happening through the process of his model.[4] Geertz (1973:89) defines culture as "historically transmitted patterns of meaning embodied in symbols." He assumes that communities use symbols as a means to embody configurations of meaning and that they join symbols together in configurative systems. These systems are webs of significance, a cultural context within which people can make what they experience to be intelligible (Geertz 1973:5-14). They form models *of reality* in people's minds, synopses of their perception of the social and psychological reality that they experience. They simultaneously form models *for reality*, patterns in people's minds that guide their choices regarding what to do (Geertz 1966:6-8). The symbols that embody these configurations may take many forms, such as an object, act, event, quality or relation (Geertz 1966:5). Geertz understands religion to be a system of such symbols,

synthesizing a people's ethos and their view of the world, integrating their moral and aesthetic approaches to life with their picture of the way things actually are. Sacred symbols function simultaneously as models of the structure and constitution of reality, as models for the way people are to live in accord with reality, and as stimulations for powerful moods and motivations to so live.[5]

Hiebert's model of critical contextualization is designed to facilitate an ongoing construction of a biblically informed religious symbol system in people's minds.[6] The first step (phenomenological description) seeks to help people become aware of the symbol system that is guiding the ways people in their culture perceive an issue or concern and the ways available to respond to it. The second step seeks to engage people with biblical symbols, increasing their understanding of them. It seeks to help people perceive an issue or concern through the lens of biblical symbols and configurations, and to grasp what options for response those symbols offer. The third and fourth steps are concerned to help people to reconfigure their symbol system under the influence of biblical teaching, retaining some old symbols, modifying others, discarding others, and bringing biblical symbols and configurations into dominant roles. If critical contextualization is successful, the Bible will inform new configurations of the Christian community's symbol system. The new configurations will function as models of the structure and constitution of reality, as models for the way people are to live in accord with reality, and as stimulations for powerful moods and motivations to so live. Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:254) state, "Contextualization of the gospel in other cultures must begin at the level of signs [symbols]. This is true for Bible translation. It is equally true for Christian behavior and rituals."[7]

Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:232-233) follow Charles Peirce in understanding signs to be an external form (generally community created conventions) that evokes a mental image or concept and refers to some perceived reality. They interpret Geertz's symbols in terms of Peirce's understanding of signs.[8] That is to say, they understand Geertz's symbols to have external forms and to evoke conceptions in people's minds, providing a means for people to refer to and make intelligible a perceived reality. Peirce's position assumes that there is a reality, both material and metaphysical, that is ontologically external to people's consciousness of it. Signs are what connect "the world of exterior realities to inner mental worlds" (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:232). Nishioka (1997:113-116) observes that Hiebert's model of critical contextualization seeks to provide a means for people to examine the correspondence of their symbols and systems of symbols with the world of exterior realities. The Bible is understood to be a reliable expression of the reality of God, the activity and purposes of God, and particular characteristics of the world God has created. Through examining and engaging with the realities presented by the Bible, people can use their understanding of biblical truths to evaluate the correspondence of their symbols and symbol systems to the world of exterior realities. They can then make choices to modify them to be more congruent with the realities presented by the Bible.

Dodd, Green, Paden, and Hiebert

The hermeneutical issues raised in chapter three provide a way to clarify where Hiebert's model needs more development, particularly in regard to Bible study strategy. They also clarify the significance of bringing into the model contributions from Dodd, Green, and Paden. The following will evaluate Hiebert's model in relation to the

hermeneutical issues regarding (1) the aims and interests people pursue, both consciously and unconsciously, when they study the Bible; (2) the distance between the horizons of biblical texts from the horizons of contemporary readers; and (3) the modes through which people engage biblical texts. I will also indicate ways that Dodd, Green, and Paden can modify the model so that its Bible study strategy more effectively addresses those issues.

Aims and Interests

Hermeneutical discussion has brought attention to the possibility of vested interests shaping our interpretations of biblical texts so that our interpretations are self-serving. It also has asserted the importance of keeping our interpretations provisional and open to challenge, since every interpretation of a biblical text privileges some aspects of a text over others. It further affirms the need to listen for the communicative intent and interests of biblical texts so that we may hear their address to us as an "other" and thereby have our horizons expanded. Hiebert's model responds to these issues by encouraging people in the church, both locally and globally, to dialog with each other in regard to their biblical interpretations, to depend upon the Holy Spirit to guide their interpretations, to employ exegetical strategies, and to observe theological criteria repeatedly affirmed by church tradition. Dialog and observing theological criteria repeatedly affirmed by church tradition encourages people to recognize that there may be biases in their interpretations and to be open to others in the church to provide checks on their interpretations. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit and the employment of exegetical strategies involves listening for the communicative intent and interests of biblical texts.

More needs to be clarified, however, in regard to what facilitates community dialog over the interpretation of biblical texts and what exegetical strategies should be employed. Hiebert's emphasis upon leaders presenting their communities with the truths of biblical texts can lead to problems with vested interests determining what is "the proper interpretation" of biblical texts. It may also inhibit true dialog. Leaders often have a social location that grants them privileges and De La Torre (2002:4) reminds us that, "when the Bible is read from the social location of those whom society privileges, the risk exists that interpretations designed to protect their power and privilege are subconsciously or consciously constructed." If leaders have the role of presenting the truths of biblical texts to their people, how free are their people to suggest alternatives to or modifications of what the leaders say is the truth expressed by a biblical text? In this framework, is dialog limited to clarifying what the leaders say is the meaning of the text? Hiebert's model permits an active role for the whole community in steps one, three, and four. Why not shift the leaders' role from presenting the truths expressed by biblical texts to facilitating the whole community's dialog with the texts and each other in pursuit of what God is communicating to them through the texts?[9] Perhaps what Hiebert understands to be needed exegetical strategies are such that only those with expertise can employ them. If so, this furthers the risk that the privilege of "expertise" may bring about interpretations that protect the power and privilege of the experts.

Green's assumptions that biblical texts should be studied as acts of communication and that ongoing social interactions contribute to the meaning people perceive, suggests that Hiebert's model will more effectively achieve its goals if it made Bible interpretation to be a communal project. If all the community or group socially

interacts with biblical texts as acts of communication, they will be engaging with the communication of biblical texts rather than with what leaders present those texts to say. Their conversation with each other, biblical texts, and the Spirit of God will be a means for stimulating and constraining each other to perceive what the biblical texts are communicating to them. Social interaction with biblical texts provides the opportunity for the texts to draw people into an engagement with the configuration of symbols and referents the texts present, rather than whatever configuration the leader might have presented as the truths of the texts. Shifting Bible interpretation to being the above kind of communal activity provides the opportunity for people to develop into the hermeneutical community that Hiebert advocates. They provide checks on each other's biases and vested interests, including those of the leaders. However, communities and groups have their own group aims and interests that may inhibit them from listening for the aims and interests of biblical texts. Further insights from Dodd, Green, and Paden are needed to help to mitigate this problem.

When leaders shift their role from presenting the truths expressed by biblical texts to facilitating the whole community's dialog with the texts, Dodd's model directs leaders to help their group become conscious of cultural difference. They can help their group become aware that we all bring interpretive schemes to a text, and that these may be different from interpretive schemes that have informed the writing of a text and its placement in the biblical canon.[10] Leaders can then direct the uncertainty and anxiety created by this awareness into an intercultural conversation with the text. Dodd's model alerts leaders to be aware that uncertainty and anxiety can lead to dysfunctional communication strategies and directs them to facilitate the formation of a temporary third

culture arena within which to dialog. Within this arena attention is given to building trust and comfort, making it safe for people to try out ways of interpreting a text and to see how well their interpretations fit with the signals presented by the text. Leaders can guide the dialog to seek for the aims and interests of the biblical texts and what they might have to do or not do with their group's aims and interests. They can also guide the dialog to seek for mutually beneficial coordination of the group's aims and interests with the aims and interests of biblical texts.

Green's discourse analysis provides questions that can help the group to engage a biblical text with a view to perceiving its aims and interests. It directs the group to make primary the question, What communicative aims and functions is the text seeking to achieve with us? Another way to say this is, What kind of effect upon or response from us is the text seeking to elicit? Green's analysis questions provide ways to pursue that primary question and to prod the group to keep expanding their awareness of the webs of relationships within which a biblical text has been set in the Bible and is being set by the group. Leaders can adjust the language of Green's questions to fit the capacity of the group. Learning how to prod people to notice webs of relationships is a way for leaders to facilitate the group's use of exegetical strategies.

Paden's world-building structures direct leaders to encourage the group to look particularly for the religious aims and interests of texts. What narratives are expressed or assumed by the text? What examples or directions are given for ritual structuring of space and time? What engagements with God are expressed, expected, or encouraged? What paths for becoming holy and living a holy life are expressed or assumed? Through these various means, what do the texts present to be sacred values or purposes? Such questions

invite intuitive, analogical, and analytical processes to be utilized in their pursuit. They orient Green's discourse analysis questions to seek for the ways the relations they examine provide insight into these religious aims and interests. These same questions can be asked in regard to the ways people in contemporary culture respond to the issue or concern that was studied in step one of Hiebert's model. This provides a way for the group to compare their contemporary religious world with the religious world presented by a biblical text and to hear what kind of changes the biblical text may be interested in achieving in their contemporary religious world.

Distance between Horizons

Hermeneutical discussion has brought attention to the challenges that the distance between the horizons of biblical texts and the horizons of contemporary people create. This distance is cultural, linguistic, temporal, and often theological. It can at times make the concerns of biblical texts appear to be far removed from contemporary life and as having little to do with contemporary issues. This distance can make it unclear what assumptions and patterns a text presupposes people will bring to their engagement with its communication. It challenges contemporary people regarding what to use to fill in gaps and indeterminacies that are presented by biblical texts. It creates a need for them to find adequate frameworks for engaging with the texts. It underscores the importance of dialog and the activity of God's Spirit for extending and transforming the horizons of contemporary people so that they adequately perceive and engage with the communication of the texts.

Hiebert's model gives little direct response to these issues. The model suggests that contemporary people (leaders) can construct an adequate framework for engaging

with biblical texts through an analysis of the categories, logic, and truths revealed in the Bible, and through learning the overall biblical narrative. It also suggests that people can use exegetical strategies in the context of this framework to discern truths presented by biblical texts. They can employ theological criteria repeatedly affirmed by church tradition and depend upon the Holy Spirit to guide their discernment. Hiebert's model further suggests that bridging the distance between horizons will require people to develop and use a metacultural framework to translate the biblical truths they discern into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of their local culture.

Hiebert's model needs to say more, and something different, if it is to adequately address the challenges the distance between horizons raise for contemporary people. Hiebert makes a distinction between determining the categories, logic, and truths revealed in the Bible through analysis and learning the overall biblical narrative. He (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999b:24) associates the former with systematic theology, which suggests that the analysis is concerned with deriving a propositional system of truth from the Bible. However, the Bible is full of narrative, instructional, prophetic, and experiential material, which suggests its various books employ different categories and logic than a propositional system employs. Hiebert does not indicate how the categories, logic, and truth presented by biblical texts are to be discerned. How may the distance between horizons be navigated so that contemporary interpreters may adequately do such an analysis? Hiebert also does not indicate how the overall biblical narrative is to be learned. He further does not identify exegetical strategies that can be utilized in this framework to fill in gaps and indeterminacies presented by biblical texts. Nor does he identify any exegetical strategies that facilitate the horizons of contemporary people to be

transformed so that they can adequately perceive and engage with the communication of the texts.

Hiebert's language about using a metacultural framework to translate truths presented by biblical texts leaves unclear what kind of metacultural framework he has in mind and how it is to be developed. The language of "translating truths" suggests a process of determining particular universal principles that a biblical text presents and then finding ways to embody those principles in contemporary language and culture. His discussion in Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:278-279) indicates that the presentation of translated truths will often take a form of retelling the biblical narratives in ways that contemporary people can understand. However, can we determine all the universal principles a biblical text expresses, and if so, how? Can a universal principle capture the relational dimensions of a text and the force of what God is eliciting from us adequately enough to guide a translation? Perhaps a given text authentically communicates a variety of things, depending on the perspectives and needs that people bring to their listening to it. Should our goal be to determine universal principles from a text in order to translate them, or would we be better served to work on learning to pick up cues from the text regarding how to engage with it and the God who speaks through it?

Dodd's model indicates that bridging the distance between horizons requires people to engage in a process of intercultural communication. It would direct Hiebert's model to bring this process into effect. Dodd's model assumes that people construct their perceptions of what someone from another culture is communicating through ongoing interaction with that person and their communicative activity. Through the process of interaction people receive cues and feedback that help them to locate and/or construct

possible interpretive schemes to make sense of what the other is communicating. They seek to fill in gaps and indeterminacies in ways that bring adequate coherence to the features of the communicative activity. If the cultural other is a biblical text, ongoing exploration of the webs of relation within which a text is embedded provide the cues and feedback that furthers the process of locating or constructing adequate interpretive schemes. Analysis, intuition, analogical imagination, and the Spirit of God assist such exploration, prodding interpretive schemes to come into view. Different members of the community or group studying the Bible can employ their varying gifts in these areas to help each other.

Paden's structures of religious world construction directs the group interacting with biblical texts to look for the narratives, rituals, interactions with God, and ways of holiness that provide webs of relations for the religious expressions in biblical texts. Such webs of relations offer frameworks that both fit with biblical texts and can be engaged by analysis, intuition, and analogical imagination. Such engagements stimulate and constrain the way the group fills in gaps and indeterminacies presented by the texts. Green's discourse analysis questions can work within the context of Paden's structures to provide direction for perceiving and investigating these webs of relations. They direct the group to look to the literary arrangement of a biblical text and its co-text, the staging of features in the text, the mention of people and events, the mention of paralinguistic phenomena, the style of language, etc., to provide cues to what the text is assuming people will provide when they read it. They also direct the group to look for textual cues that point to the intertextual network a text is presupposing and within which it is pursuing its concerns. They direct the group to follow these cues to discern the religious worlds the

text was written within and is addressing. This investigation helps relational patterns appropriate to those religious worlds to come into view. Through intuitive and analogical modes of understanding group members can use their perception of these patterns to connect and interweave them with patterns in their contemporary religious worlds. As the group pursues this as a process of intercultural communication, they will perceive ways to fill in gaps and indeterminacies presented by texts that are both adequate to the texts and speak relevantly to contemporary life.

Dodd's model would direct all of the above to be pursued in the context of relationship building, both with the God who speaks through biblical texts and with others in the group. The experience of their relationship with God and each other motivates the group's exploration of what God is saying to them through biblical texts. It also provides an important dimension that stimulates and constrains what they will perceive the biblical texts to be communicating to them. Dodd's model directs an environment to be created that is conducive to relationship building with other group members and a God who speaks of things beyond their horizons of understanding. Leaders can help such an environment to form by inviting group members to share their thoughts, encouraging respect for each person and what they say, and providing time for interpersonal interaction. Paden's religious world building structures suggests that the focusing power of a ritual process might assist people in entering into such an environment. It can help people to trust in the Spirit of God to guide their dialog with biblical texts and to experience God's voice speaking to them through the texts. It can facilitate the formation of Christian community among group members. Such experiences

will contribute to the expansion of group member's own horizons and to what group members hear God to be communicating through biblical texts.

Modes of Engagement

Hermeneutical discussion has brought attention to the effect that reading biblical texts as theological addressees of those texts has upon what people will hear the texts to say. The canonical shape of biblical texts facilitates their capacity to be read this way and to authoritatively address all Christian communities. Their inclusion in a Christian canon implies that Christians should presume that biblical texts mediate a communicative intent, they should read the texts in the Spirit, and they should give attention to the ways the texts participate in the whole story of God the canon collectively unfolds. It also implies that Christians need to give attention to the practices of the Christian community that lead to or result from the way they read the texts. This includes the ways other Christian communities have read the texts and how those ways have encouraged or hindered faithful living. The discussion has also brought attention to the way engaging biblical texts in cooperation with their language modes will affect what people perceive and receive from them. Their language modes (narrative, instructions, prophecy, and experiential and revelatory material) are an essential vehicle by which biblical texts pursue their communicative aims and interests.

Hiebert's model responds to these issues by intentionally trying to pursue much of what the discussion affirms. His model intends for Christians to interpret biblical texts in the Spirit, to see the truths of biblical texts within the context of what the whole canon presents to be the story of God and the reality of the world, to shape their lives in response to the truths of biblical texts, and to be a hermeneutical community that allows

other Christian communities to provide checks on their interpretations. He does not give much attention to the practices of the Christian community that lead to the way they read the texts, but the goal of his model is to bring about practices that express the truths of the texts. He affirms the need for Christian practices (rituals and ministries) to express the truths of the Bible and to speak relevantly to the local culture. He also affirms the value of leaders presenting the truths of biblical texts in narrative modes, but otherwise gives little attention to the issue of engaging biblical texts in cooperation with their language modes.

Within the framework of what Hiebert's model affirms, it still is not altogether clear what the model has in mind as a strategy for engaging biblical texts as theological addressees of the texts. It is possible for people to listen to texts as the carriers of principles and truth claims that are universally valid. In their listening they focus on discerning what truths can be derived from the texts and recognize the need for those truths to shape their lives. In effect, the texts are engaged as repositories of principles and truth claims that address all people. It is also possible for people to engage biblical texts as acts of communication to them and all other Christian communities. They become personally involved in what the texts are saying and through that involvement interact with the God who inspired them. Both of these approaches could claim to engage biblical texts as theological addressees of the texts. Employment of one or the other, or some combination of the two will lead to different effects on what people perceive and receive from their engagement with biblical texts. Hiebert's orientation towards leaders translating the truths of biblical texts and his lack of attention to engaging biblical texts in

cooperation with their language modes suggests his model is primarily concerned with helping people to engage biblical texts as repositories of universally valid truth.

Green's discourse analysis would direct Hiebert's model to be pursued in a way where biblical texts are engaged as acts of communication, seeking to achieve communicative aims and functions with us. Green assumes that interacting with texts in this way creates an opportunity for the communicative effects of the texts to reform our dispositions and influence our practices in the world, the goal of Hiebert's model. His analysis questions provide ways for people to locate or adjust perspectives that help them to enter into the communication of a text with increasing adequacy. Dodd's model also supports engaging texts as acts of communication by drawing attention to the importance of interpersonal interaction for the construction of what people perceive a cultural other to be communicating. Engaging biblical texts as interpersonal communication brings into view not only the informational content of the texts, but also such things as attitudes, values, purposes, and offered relationship. The interaction develops personal relationship with God who speaks through the texts and with others who are participating in the interaction, motivating positive responses and commitments to God. A developing relationship with God and experiences of hearing from God through interacting with the texts strengthens people's commitment to respond to an issue or concern in ways that correspond to what they perceive biblical texts to direct.

Paden's world-building structures indicate that the process of Hiebert's model will construct or modify religious worlds only as people engage with language and behavioral options presented by biblical texts through the socializing power of myth, ritual, gods, and systems of purity. People's engagement of biblical texts in cooperation

with the language modes they utilize presents an opportunity for this to happen. For example, people can cooperate with the language mode of biblical narrative and imaginatively enter into the mythic power of the narrative, experiencing through it the creative and transforming power of God. They can cooperate with the language mode of biblical instructions and engage them as systems of purity that direct them toward what constitutes God's values and purpose, and what fosters God's order or diminishes it. They can cooperate with the language mode of biblical prophecy by hearing the words as from God, experiencing his presence and power, hearing his warnings and promises, and responding in repentance and hope. They can cooperate with the language mode of biblical experiential and revelatory material by reflecting upon the experiences they portray and engaging with God in ways guided by the material. Such engagements will affect what people perceive biblical texts to be communicating and their openness to reconfigurations of the symbol systems of their religious worlds that they perceive the texts to be eliciting. It would direct Hiebert's model to give attention to this dimension of engaging biblical texts as acts of communication.

Intercultural Conversation Strategy of Bible Study

The discussion above has argued that Hiebert's model of critical contextualization needs development and modification in regard to its Bible study strategy. It has indicated ways that contributions from Dodd, Green, and Paden can help the model to address issues that have been raised in contemporary hermeneutical discussions and better pursue its transformational agenda and mission goal. In what follows I will pull these contributions together into an intercultural conversation strategy of Bible study that can provide a more developed step two for Hiebert's model. I will then suggest a way that

Hiebert's model might be modified from one of sequential steps to one that makes the steps foci of conversation that can interactively contribute to each other's development. I use the image of an intercultural conversation, because the process of exploring and engaging biblical texts with our own cultural situations is one of interaction with biblical voices from other cultures. An intercultural conversation with those voices suggests an interpersonal as well as an intercultural process. It orients Bible study towards a process of constructing personal relationships and developing understandings and responses through interactions with those voices, God, and fellow participants in the study. An intercultural conversation assumes differences that exist between the cultural horizons of biblical texts and those studying the texts can be adequately brought together through an interactive process.

Figure 6 presents a diagram of the strategy. The circle represents an arena that functions as a third culture environment within which a Christian group engages in an intercultural conversation with biblical texts. It is a place and time where the group may explore what biblical texts contribute to their understanding of an issue or concern and what guidance the texts give for responding to it as Christians. It is also a place and time where the group seeks to develop Christian communal bonds with God and each other as they help each other explore biblical texts. The group enters the arena through a rite of separation, such as singing a Christian song, prayer, etc. This helps the group to raise their consciousness of the presence of God, to depend upon God to guide their study, and to transition to the ways of interacting that facilitate the intercultural conversation. The rite of separation gives explicit attention to asking God to help the group to expand their understanding of the issue they are studying and how God wants them to respond to it.

This implicitly suggests that biblical texts may present some perspectives that are presently beyond the group's horizon of understanding.

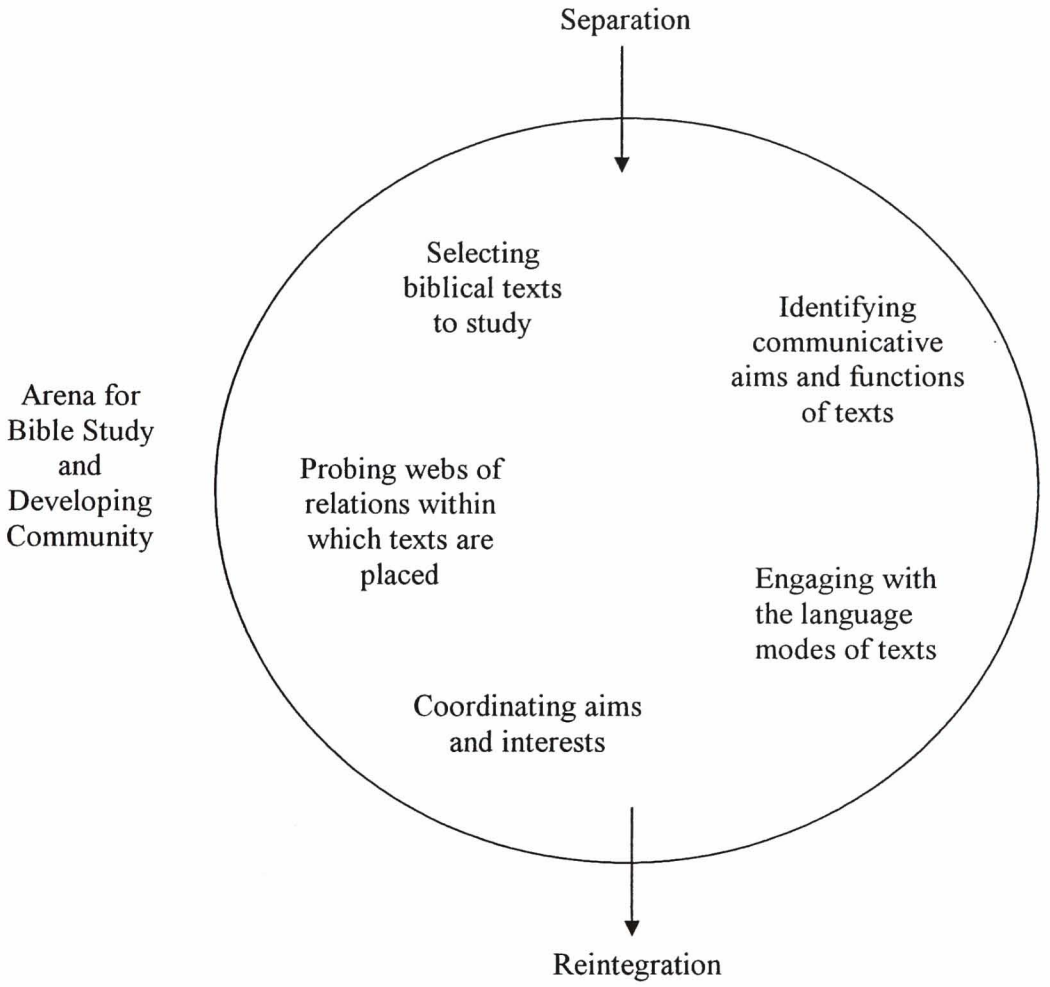

Figure 6: Intercultural Conversation Strategy of Bible Study

The diagram identifies various activities that take place within the arena. These activities do not have to be kept discreet from one another or be engaged in a particular order. The group can return to activities as developments of the conversation in one activity indicate the need for more development in another activity. All of the activities are important to the strategy and they collectively implement the intercultural conversation with biblical texts. Leaders encourage attention to be given to each activity and play the role of facilitating the conversation. They take what actions are needed to help group members feel respected and able to contribute as they interact with each other, biblical texts, and God within the arena. They initiate conversation in relation to any of the activities as needed and make sure all the activities are attended to by the group. Group members may also initiate conversation in relation to any of the activities and return attention to an activity when it seems valuable to do so.

Selecting biblical texts to study is concerned with locating and reading biblical texts that might speak to the issue or concern that is before the group. Leaders and group members can use whatever resources they have available to locate possible texts: memory of biblical texts previously read, Bible concordances and topical indexes, theological literature and tradition, and so on. These can help the group to initially locate some texts that might speak to the issue or some aspect of the issue. As they engage in other activities of the conversation, the group may come across or recall other texts that they want to make a part of the study. Group members help each other discern which texts to focus upon the most in their study. If group members are used to leadership selecting what texts are studied, or have little knowledge of the Bible, leaders may have to initially

do most of the locating of texts that speak to an issue. However, they should seek to expand the capacity of group members to contribute in this way.

Identifying the communicative aims and functions of texts raises the question of what a particular text is seeking to do with those who read it. Leaders can ask group members questions like, "What do you hear the text to be saying?" "What does hearing the text make you think, feel, or want to do?" and "What kind of response is the text seeking for from us?" As group members respond to these questions, leaders can ask group members to try to explain why they have the response they do, and what in the text elicits their response. They can also ask group members to try to think of other possibilities of what the text might be aiming to communicate. Leaders can help group members to notice assumptions that a particular response has brought to the hearing of the text. They can also help them to notice the assumptions that alternative ways of hearing the text employ. They can then return to the text to consider what assumptions fit best with the features of the text.

Probing webs of relationships within which texts are placed involves the group in examining the text via Paden's structures of religious world construction and Green's discourse analysis questions. Leaders direct the group to see if there are any narratives, ritualistic activity, interactions with God, and/or ways of holiness that are expressed or assumed by the text they are studying. As these are identified, leaders can encourage group members to reflect upon what the texts say or assume through these modes about God, God's values and purposes, God's relationship to people and the world, God's response to what people do and what people need, ways people are to relate to God and the world, etc. Leaders also direct the group to look to the literary arrangement of a

biblical text and its co-text, the staging of features in the text, the mention of people and events, the mention of paralinguistic phenomena, the style of language, etc., to provide cues to what the text is assuming people will provide when they read it. They also direct the group to look for textual cues that point to the intertextual network a text is presupposing and within which it is pursuing its concerns. They direct the group to follow these cues to discern the religious worlds the text was written within and is addressing.

Engaging with the language modes of the texts involves the group in imaginatively becoming involved in the communication of the text. If the text presents a narrative, the group enters into the narrative, hearing its testimony of the activity of God in the lives of people and experiencing its creative power to elicit faith that looks for further activity of God. If the text presents instructions, the group listens to them as directions given to God's people that guide them toward what constitutes God's values and purposes, and what fosters God's order or diminishes it. If the text presents prophecy, the group listens to it as words that express God's view of a particular situation, hearing God's warnings and promises, and the repentance and hope they seek to elicit. If the text presents experiential and revelatory material, they reflect upon the experiences they portray and how they might engage with God in ways guided by the material.

Coordinating aims and interests of the group with the texts engages the group in considering what the communicative aims and function of the texts they are studying have to do with the issue that is before them. Leaders can ask group members to share what they think about this. They can prod them to reflect upon why they have interests in the issue and what is at stake for them in the ways they might respond to it. They can ask

them to consider what narratives, rituals, interactions with gods, and systems of purity inform the way people in their culture respond to an issue. What understandings of the sacred, sacred purposes and values, and relations of the world to the sacred are present in the cultural ways of responding to the issue? Group members can share what perspectives the biblical texts they have studied provide for their understanding of the issue or aspects of it. They can identify what kind of directions the texts provide for responding to the issue.

I again want to say that the activities identified in the diagram do not have to be kept discreet from one another or be engaged in a particular order. More than one can be pursued at the same time or in an interactive way. The group can return to any of the activities as developments of the conversation in one activity indicate the need for more development in another activity. When the time available for a particular Bible study session has expired or when the group is convinced their Bible study has reached an adequate level of completion, they can exit the arena through a rite of reintegration. This might involve a song and a prayer thanking God for guidance.

The intercultural conversation strategy of Bible study can function as a more developed step two for Hiebert's model. However, I think Hiebert's model would be helped by permitting activity in each of the steps to feed back upon and prod further conversation on the focus of other steps. Hiebert has a legitimate worry that people will not be forthcoming in describing the particular cultural beliefs and practices that people in their local contexts associate with an issue if those descriptions are immediately met with evaluative judgments. That is why he separates this activity into a step one that precedes the Bible study of step two and the evaluation of step three. However, the Bible

study strategy that I have set forth might prod further aspects of cultural beliefs and practices associated with an issue to come to mind that might in turn prod further Bible study. Step three's effort at evaluation of the cultural beliefs and practices in the light of the Bible might also stimulate further aspects of those beliefs and practices to come into view along with further need for Bible study. The level of the adequacy of step four's implementation of ritual practices and ministries that were decided upon in step three might stimulate further need to return to the previous steps. Praxis often stimulates further reflection upon the praxis.

Figure 7 depicts another possible way to configure Hiebert's model of critical contextualization. The circle depicts the same arena for conversation and developing community that is utilized in the intercultural conversation strategy of Bible study. A Christian group enters it by a rite of separation and exits it by a rite of reintegration. Steps one, two, and three of Hiebert's model become foci for conversation. Initially the group does the phenomenological analysis of step one. They then move to step two, but are free to return to the activity of step one if conversation in step two prods them to do so. When they move to step three, they are free to return to the activity of steps one and two as the conversation nudges them to do so. The group might at times move back and forth between the activities of steps one, two, and three quite rapidly. It may take a number of sessions before the group feels the activities of steps one, two, and three have reached a level of adequacy. Once this occurs they move on to implementing their decisions through step four. Step four is placed outside of the arena, because it represents the group's engagement with the issue in the context of their cultural communities. The line

from step four back to re-entry into the arena indicates that the activity of step four might prod the group to further study of the issue.

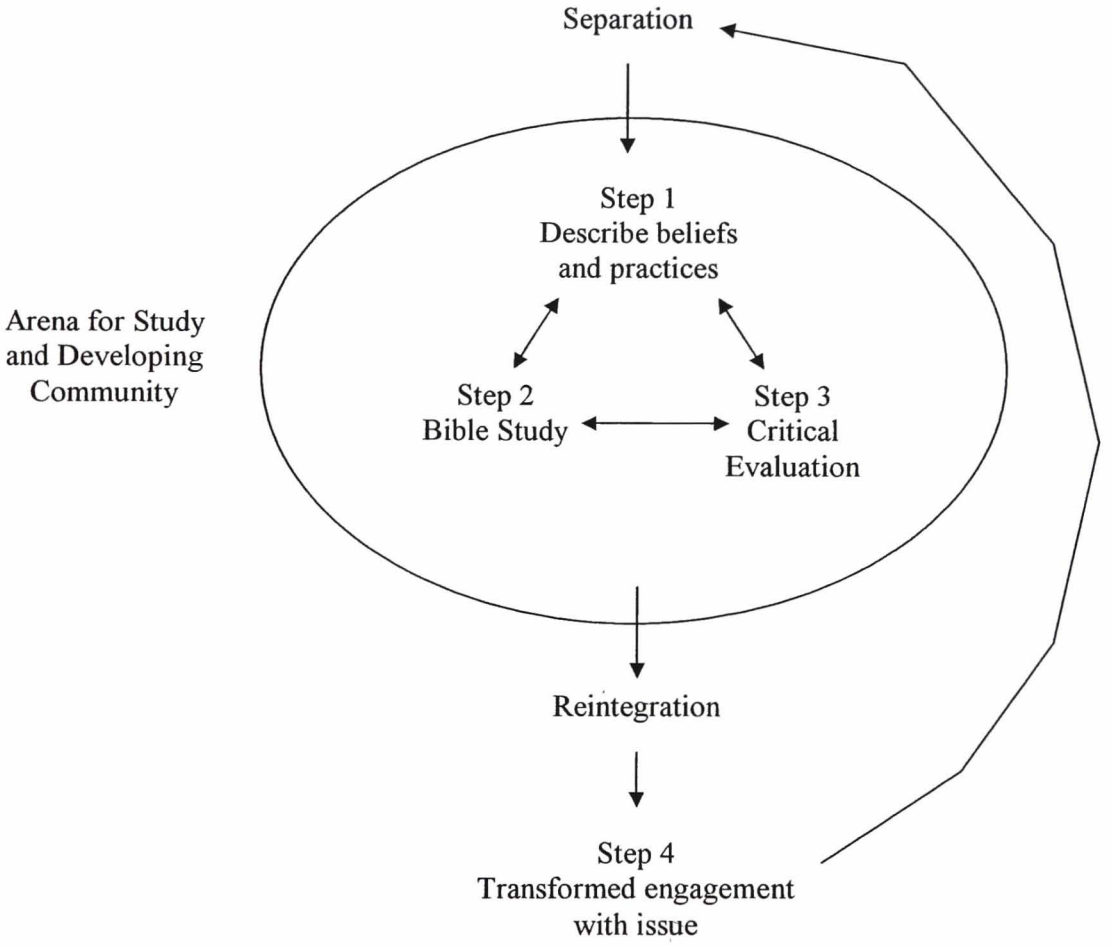

Figure 7: Reconfiguration of Hiebert's Model of Critical Contextualization

I think it is helpful to also consider the diversity of cultural worlds that people who participate in a process of critical contextualization might be bringing to their Bible study and that process. Hiebert's model tends to assume people in a particular Christian community come from similar cultural backgrounds and participate within the same local culture. Many Christian communities, however, are composed of people from diverse cultural backgrounds who spend much of their time in different local cultures or subcultures. This presents the possibility of a considerable range in the strength of community bonds that participants in a Christian community or group may have with each other. It also presents the possibility that critical contextualization may lead to some responses and ministries that members of a Christian community do as a group and to some responses and ministries that particular members shape to their cultural background and the local cultural life within which they spend much of their time. Culturally diverse local Christian groups and communities have the opportunity to experience the richness of being a diverse intercultural hermeneutical community.

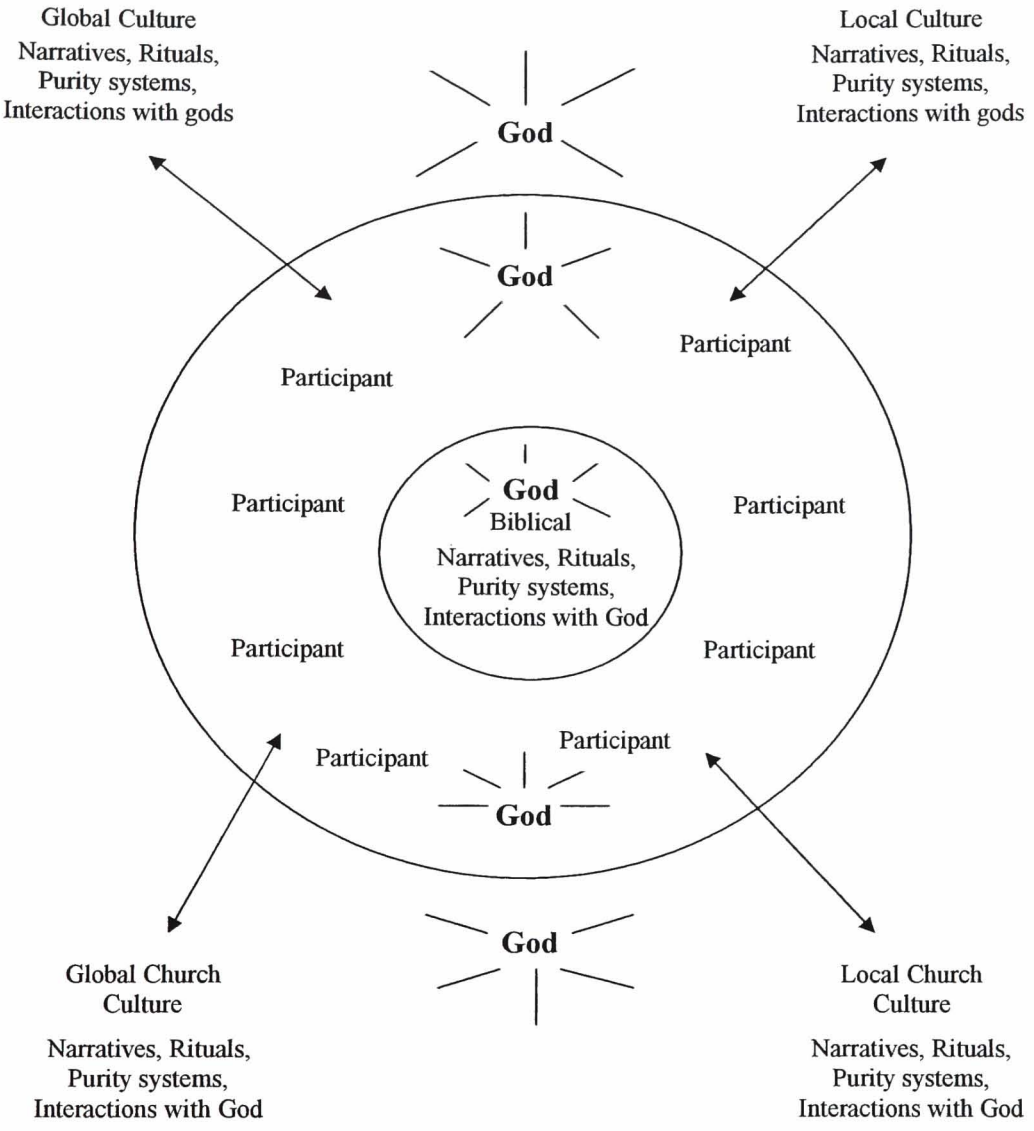

Figure 8: Influences Shaping the Religious Worlds of Community Participants

The religious worlds of people who participate in a Christian community or group may also not be uniform and may receive socializing influences from more than one culture. The currents of globalization that are affecting so much of the world suggests that for many Christians, their religious worlds are influenced by their local culture, global culture, local church culture, global church culture, and the Bible (see Figure 8). Paden's structures of religious world construction suggest that each of these cultures have sacred narratives, rituals, purity systems, and interactions with what is deemed sacred. They each present through these structures systems of symbols that provide models of the structure and constitution of reality, models for they way people are to live in accord with reality, and stimulations for powerful moods and motivations to so live. The competing socializing influence of each of these cultures make possible some difference in what is more dominating and what is more subsidiary in the makeup of the religious world each member of a Christian community or group is experiencing. People will bring these differences to their engagements with the Bible. It presents the opportunity for different members of the community to bring different perspectives to the group's conversation with biblical texts and to help each other more adequately construct what meaning they perceive the texts to be communicating. It can lead to a sharing of biblical configurations of symbols that guide similar understandings of God, people, and the world. These in turn may lead critical contextualization to ministries that end up addressing not only the local culture and local church culture, but also the global culture and the global church culture.

NOTES

[1] Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:387) quotes the typification of the contextual approach presented by the Willowbank Report as a summary of the process of critical contextualization.

[2] Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:24,386) state that leaders play a major role in presenting the teaching of biblical texts, because this is their area of expertise.

[3] Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:386) provide another example of what they mean by leaders helping their communities study biblical truths that are relevant to the issue or concern. They state, "In dealing with demon possession, they [leaders] teach people the Christian doctrines of spirits, angels, and demons. Here the leaders play a major role, for this is their area of their expertise. Lay Christians should be involved in the study, however, because they must learn how to interpret the Bible for themselves. It is important that the leaders be sensitive to the problems of cross-cultural understandings in interpreting Bible passages into the local language."

[4] Hiebert's agreement with Geertz on his understanding of religion as a cultural system is clearly expressed in Hiebert (1985:205-207) and Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:35). His use of Peirce's triadic view of signs is expressed in Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999b:232-234.

[5] This paragraph is in part indebted to the discussion by Nishioka (1997:77-79).

[6] Speaking of this in the language of worldview, Hiebert (1997:85) states, "We are part of the worldview we have, but we must continually examine that worldview in the light of Scripture, and consciously work to change its understanding of reality."

[7] I am applying the discussion in Hiebert (1985:204-215) and Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b: 35-43) to Hiebert's model.

[8] I have not been able to discern any consistent distinction that Hiebert makes between the words "sign" and "symbol." Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999b:232) define "sign" as "a word, object, action, event, pattern, quality, relation, person, or concrete particular that serves as a vehicle for a conception of some perceived reality." Compare this with Geertz's (1966:4) definition of symbol as "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception." Hiebert seems to use the vocabulary of his sources at any particular point in his writings.

[9] In *Christianity Rediscovered*, Donovan (2003) portrays the whole community's involvement in discerning what a particular biblical narrative is saying to them. Leaders play the role of facilitating this involvement.

[10] This could be done by (1) giving attention to features of the text that appear strange to us, (2) bringing forth possible background to the text that contrasts with our own background, (3) observing and questioning the information we are adding to the text in order to help it be meaningful to us, (4) imagining alternative frameworks that could be brought to the interpretation of the text, (5) juxtaposing contrasting interpretations that others have presented, etc.

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